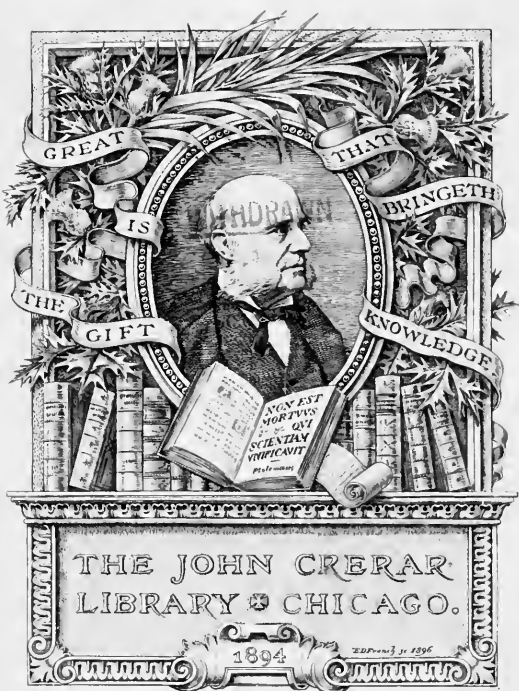


NEW ÆRA

A SOCIALIST ROMANCE

EDWARD G. HERBERT, B.Sc.



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NEW ÆRA

A Socialist Romance

WITH A CHAPTER ON VACCINATION

BY

EDWARD G. HERBERT, B.Sc.

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Part I
THE DISCUSSION

NEW ÆR A

PART I.

THE DISCUSSION.

“THE present state of things is intolerable, and there is no other remedy.”

So said Frank Ledingham, as he paced the sumptuously furnished dining-room of St. Michael's Hall.

The person he addressed was his father, Sir Philip Ledingham, who, half-reclining in his easy chair, with cigar in hand and coffee on the little table by his side, watched the restless movements of his son with an expression of earnest attention, tinged with sadness or even disappointment. Frank was indeed a trouble to him. Not that he had ever indulged in any of those extravagances and foolish or vicious escapades with which young men sometimes sadden the hearts of rich and indulgent fathers. Frank Ledingham had been a straight and clean-living youth and man: generous, impulsive, an affectionate son and brother, he had early shown an aptitude for his father's profession; and when Sir Philip sent him to college to get the best training in the scientific and theoretical side of engineering, it was with the confident anticipation that in a few years he would be able to hand over the reins of the great engineering business which represented his own life-work, to one who would start with the best intellectual equipment that money could buy, added to something, perhaps, of his own natural ability and strength of character.

Frank had gone to college, and in the course of three strenuous years had done himself credit, rather by steady

work than by any specially brilliant achievement. He had come home a trained scientific engineer, and—a red-hot socialist. That was the trouble. At first, indeed, Sir Philip regarded this latest and most unexpected development with something of amused equanimity. The wild ideas his son had imbibed from a band of very young men with whom he had got mixed up at college would soon get their corners rubbed off in daily contact with the problems and responsibilities of business life. But Sir Philip had seen with growing uneasiness that the expected change did not occur. Frank's generous and sympathetic impulses had only received fresh stimulus from the social inequalities among which he found himself in the great manufacturing city, where the extremes of wealth and poverty jostled each other with seeming indifference on the one hand and hopeless misery on the other. His own wealth and social station, and the position of deputy autocrat which he was often called upon to occupy in his father's works, gave him opportunities of trying experiments of a socialistic nature, and when a period of slack trade brought unemployment in its wake, he had initiated some socialistic schemes, both in the works and in the city, on such a scale and with such results as to cause his father serious anxiety. Frank himself was quite undeterred by failure, which he was too honest not to acknowledge. If socialistic experiments failed, it was because the people were not ready for socialism, and he set himself with redoubled vigour to inculcate his own high ideals of social action, giving up the whole of his income and his spare time to the work. Increased contact with his less fortunate fellow creatures brought an ever-increasing sense of the incongruity, the injustice, of his own surroundings, in his father's sumptuous suburban home, when contrasted with the lot of those whose only fault was, that they had been born of poor instead of wealthy parents. So much did this sense of injustice weigh upon him that he had lived, for nearly a year past, in a workman's cottage in the heart of the city. Only his deep affection for his father and sister induced him periodically to overcome the sense of repugnance

which was never entirely absent when he visited his father's house in the suburbs, or his lovely island home at St. Michael's.

To such a man was Sir Philip to hand over the great business which had become a part of his life. Himself of humble origin, he had risen by sheer force of character and will, aided by uncommon mechanical genius, to a foremost place in his profession. With success had come wealth—he was reputed to be a millionaire; but money, with him, had ever been rather the sign and seal of professional success than the aim of even his business life. His wealth he regarded as a measure of the service he had rendered to the community. Stern, but just in all his relations, he was respected rather than loved by those in his employ. Above all, he was an individualist. Having himself achieved success without extraneous aid, he had little sympathy with those who cast reproaches on the state of society, the industrial system, the capitalists—blaming everyone and everything but themselves and their own want of grit and energy for their failure to make a good thing of life. He judged others by the standard by which he himself was willing to be judged.

A man of simple tastes, with a hatred of ostentation, his chief delight (after his business, which was always his principal hobby) was to retire to the island of St. Michael, which he had bought. In this secluded spot he had built himself a house after his own heart, and here, within a day's journey of London, but in a climate like that of the Riviera and surrounded by almost tropical vegetation, he was wont to retire from the world, not for the purpose of selfish ease, but to ponder with entire freedom from distraction those problems—mechanical, social, and political—which were never far from his thoughts.

As his years advanced, he spent more and more of his time in the island, and he looked forward to soon retiring there to end his days in peace. But his retirement meant the handing over of his life's work to—a socialist. Not one of your socialists who preach the iniquity of wage-slavery and capitalist robbery in the intervals of paying wages and pocketing profits, but a socialist who believed in socialism,

and who, when placed in the position of autocrat of a little community, would certainly put his principles in practice, with results that might be foreseen.

Frank and he had often had it out. They were two able men who respected one another, and who were able to exchange hard knocks without bad blood; but Sir Philip felt ever-greater misgivings in looking forward to that future for which he had been planning and working ever since this son of his was born twenty-six years ago.

Frank had run over to St. Michael's to discuss with his father certain business arrangements, and, as usual, the conversation had drifted into the old channel.

"The present state of things is intolerable, and there is no other remedy," said Frank.

"That the present state of things is far from satisfactory I freely admit; that socialism would remedy any existing evil without introducing a greater one I absolutely deny."

"Well, then, what do you propose to do about it? Leave things to take their own course? If not, what is your remedy?"

Sir Philip smoked in silence for a minute before replying. Frank flung himself into a chair opposite his father and waited with an air that seemed to express "Checkmate."

"You ask me for my remedy," said Sir Philip. "Do you take me for a quack doctor with pills for earthquakes in my pocket? I will answer your question by asking another. You remember the burglary at Salter's house last autumn? A valuable old silver tea-set was stolen. The thief was caught and is now in prison; but he had melted down the silver. His wife and children are on the parish." Then, turning suddenly to Frank, "What is your remedy?"

"Remedy for what?"

"For the human suffering I have mentioned—that of the Salters, of the burglar, and of his family?"

"I don't know what you mean. I have no remedy for that kind of suffering,"

"Yet you are a socialist. If I were one I should have my remedy ready. I would alter the law so that in future anyone who stole should not be punished, but that the State

should make good the loss to the person stolen from. What do you think of it?"

"Socialists are not altogether fools. You would have half the people stealing from the other half, and all would be ruined with taxes for making good burglaries. What socialist ever proposed such a thing?"

"I don't know that anyone proposed such a thing, but that is because you socialists are not consistent; you do not carry your principles far enough. Nine-tenths of the suffering which distresses your mind and mine is the result of law-breaking. Now, wait a minute; let me finish. Some of it follows from breaches of the criminal law. A good deal follows from breaches of the moral law. I believe socialists have no remedy to propose for this suffering. But the greatest part of the suffering, and the most hopeless part, comes from breaches of the economic law, or strictly speaking, from actions which bring the actors under the adverse operation of the economic laws. Let me explain what I mean. There is at present an enormous surplus of unskilled labour. Perhaps there are twice as many unskilled men as could possibly find permanent work. It is not the actual number of workers that is at fault, but the proportion between skilled and unskilled. The state of industrial England resembles that of the watch factory, where there were a hundred skilled men to make the watches, and a hundred unskilled men to load them on to the lorry. That being so, an economic law is "broken" every time a youth drifts into life without a trade to his fingers, and suffering must inevitably follow. As things are at present, the man himself suffers from unemployment, his family suffers from poverty, all unskilled men suffer, because his added competition keeps down the wages of unskilled men; the whole community suffers by having to maintain him. There is one remedy, or rather, one way of preventing this suffering, and only one—the economic law must not be broken. The man must learn a trade. But the socialist has his quack remedy ready. Bill the burglar must not be punished, but honest folks must pay for what he has stolen. The State must find or

make work for the surplus of unskilled men, and the skilled must pay for it. Take another case. A capitalist manufacturer, or a group of them, push supply in excess of demand. There is a shrinkage of credit and a collapse of trade. Bill the burglar is punished by bankruptcy, his employees suffer unemployment, the whole community suffers from bad trade. The law is broken, and suffering must follow. What is the socialist remedy? Instead of the private employer with everything he possesses at stake, the socialist would set up a Government official with nothing at stake. Is he less likely to break the economic law? Look how our Government departments are managed. The economic law will be broken more flagrantly than it is at present, because Bill the burglar will not be punished. Honest folks will have to pay for what he has stolen. As you say, half the people will turn burglar; it will be the only paying business."

Frank had listened with growing impatience. At last he broke in—

"Your argument is very pretty, but your facts are wrong. Do you know that there are always 500,000 unemployed, even when trade is at its best, and that a large part of them are skilled men? Look at the trade union returns. The capitalist system needs a surplus of unemployed to keep it going, and an honest workman, skilled or unskilled, cannot get work unless some capitalist will be kind enough to make a profit out of him."

"As to the proportion of unskilled men," said Sir Philip, "I will give you some facts that are not wrong. I wanted a manager for the works—salary £1,000 a year. I advertised for a month and got thirty applications. Only two of the applicants were fit for the post. I wanted a copying clerk, and I got 150 applications from a single advertisement in an evening paper. All of them were eager to fill the post for 25s. a week or less. I wanted an unskilled labourer, and on inquiry I found I could have as many thousands as I liked at 18s. a week. Why is it that the lower the pay one offers, the greater is the number of applicants who appear? I will tell you. Because when the supply of labour (or anything

else) is in excess of the demand, the price is always low. The wages of unskilled men are low because there are too many of them. They are not attracted by the lowness of the pay, but by the occupation which requires no training. Arbitrarily raise the wages of unskilled labour (as you socialists propose), and the surplus of unskilled labour will increase. Diminish the supply of unskilled labour (as we individualists propose) and the wages of unskilled labour will rise."

"Perhaps you will explain how you individualists propose to do it."

"Yes; here is one scheme. Every man in the country should be liable for compulsory military service, unless at the age of, say, nineteen he can show that he has prepared or is preparing himself for a useful calling, in which case he would be exempt. A certain standard of education would be required for exemption, and all who were undergoing a course of higher education would be exempt. If more soldiers were wanted the standard would be raised. Recruits would serve for three years, and would then be drafted into Government factories, where they would be kept under military discipline and taught trades. They would be employed in making stores for the Army and Navy. The first three years would make them into men, and the next two into workmen. Then they would return to civil life. Some would, no doubt, take to unskilled work, but all would have the opportunity to rise."

"I see one drawback to your scheme—there are too many skilled workers already. The unions never have less than 2 per cent. unemployed in the best of times. Your scheme would make the 2 into 20."

"That objection is based on a fallacy, and contains a misstatement of fact. The fallacy is the assumption that there is a fixed amount of work to be done, and that an increase in the proportion of skilled workers will cause an increase of unemployment. The truth is that if you increase the proportion of skilled workers—that is, raise the efficiency of the population—you increase the production of wealth, increase demand, and increase employment.

"The misstatement of fact is, that there are too many skilled workers at the best of times. On that point I can give you some facts.

"The year 1907 was the best the country ever had, but you could not open a paper without seeing a reference to unemployment. I was very much puzzled by this, and I went to our head foreman and asked him, 'How many men do you take on in the year, not by way of increasing the staff, but merely to replace other men who have left or who have been discharged?' He said, 'Oh, our men stop for years; we make very few changes.' I said, 'That is certainly my impression, but just as a matter of interest, you might go through the wages book, and see how many vacancies we have had this last twelve months, not counting any that were due to an increase in the number of men.' He did as I asked him, and he found, as much to his surprise as mine, that the number of vacancies filled during the year was 60 per cent. of the whole number of men in the works. Most of our men stay with us for years, as he said, but when one of them leaves we have to take on a constant succession of men, and sack them again, before we can find one that is any good. I was so struck with this result, that I asked Mr. Smith, of the Globe Works, to go through his wages book in the same way. His discharges were 45 per cent. of the men he employed. So you may take it that in an industry employing 10,000 men, there will be about 5,000 permanent jobs offered during the course of the year when trade is good. The figure is almost incredible, but it is correct. The truth is, there are not enough efficient men to go round in a good year. The percentage of permanently unemployed we hear so much about consists of men who are on the way from one job to another, sometimes for good reasons, but mostly because they have been 'fired out.' When times are bad, these migrants are simply not taken on, and, of course, when times are very bad there are plenty of good workmen out. That is the fault of Bill the burglar, the reckless capitalist."

"Then it seems you admit two glaring defects in the present system. Bill the burglar is not punished for his

recklessness; and his innocent victims, the unemployed, are punished. What do you propose to do about that?"

"I freely admit that there is great hardship in bad times through unemployment, and that the victims are not to blame. I also admit that something should be done not only to remove the first cause, if that is possible, but also to relieve the situation that has resulted. The primary cause of unemployment is a failure to adjust supply to demand. The secondary cause is this—the people cannot afford to buy the things they want. Therefore the makers of these things have to discharge some of their men. What is the remedy? The favourite remedy is this—the Government say, 'These people cannot afford to buy manufactures. They have not enough money. Therefore we must take from them a lot of the money they have left, in extra taxation; we must look round for something that nobody wants at all, but which will cost a lot of money—digging holes, or something of that kind—and we must spend this money we have raised in digging these holes.' The Government does this, and then looks round and says, 'Dear me, what a puzzling thing! Unemployment is worse than ever; we shall really have to raise some more taxes and dig some more holes.' Oh, most wise Government!"

"Well, now you have had your jeer at the Government, let us hear what you propose."

"I think it is fairly obvious. The Government must follow the example of every sensible man who has his income reduced. It must go without something that it wants, even something that it needs. It must retrench, remit rates and taxes, and allow the people to spend more money on things they want—things that will give employment in the ordinary course of trade—instead of taking it from them to squander it on useless extravagances.

"Imagine the two policies carried to (quite impossible) extremes. Firstly, my policy.

"About half the rates and taxes are remitted. The home trade jumps up by one hundred and fifty million pounds and a boom is started which may grow to any dimensions. Secondly, the Government policy.

"The rates and taxes are increased 50 per cent., and the money spent in relief works. The trade of the country would be at a standstill. Thousands of firms would be ruined, and the most gigantic relief works would be inadequate to cope with the distress."

"Well, it seems a novel way of dealing with unemployment, but how about Bill the burglar, the primary cause? Have you any patent scheme for dealing with him?"

"Unfortunately I have none. The organizer of industry, or employer, is in the position of a master mariner steering his ship, containing all he possesses, through a narrow and tortuous channel. On his right are the rocks of bankruptcy through rashness, on his left the rocks of bankruptcy through unprogressiveness, and there are many sunken rocks between them. Success may bring riches, but the passage is so difficult that half those who undertake it go on the rocks. The prosperity of the country is in the hands of the men who can perform this difficult feat, and I can conceive of no conditions better calculated to make them careful. That they have been careful on the whole is shown by the enormous advance in the prosperity of all classes, an advance in the possession of everything that makes life worth living, which in a single century has surpassed all the progress made by the human race since the world began. No, I have no scheme for making the captains more careful, but you socialists have one, and a wonderful scheme it is. You would put all that the nation possesses in one huge vessel, under the command of a multitude of captains with conflicting ideas of navigation, with no reward in front of them, with no stake in the cargo, with no penalty for non-success, but with a prospect of getting a lion's share of the plunder if the vessel goes on the rocks. I would rather be out of that vessel."

"Your metaphor is a trifle mixed," said Frank, "but I am relieved to see you bring it into port without absolute shipwreck. My objection is that the lion's share of the plunder does not at present go to the captain or the crew, but to a handful of idle, vicious loafers who do nothing whatever for it. Are you aware that out of a national income of one thousand

seven hundred and fifty million pounds these idle, vicious loafers get six hundred and fifty million pounds for nothing.

"No," said Sir Philip, "I am not aware of that, and should be very much surprised if anyone could make me aware of it. Do you include present company among the idle, vicious loafers?"

Frank smiled. "Present company is always excepted," said he.

"But I don't see why it should be. You have some investments I know, and so have I. We get part of that six hundred and fifty million pounds of rent and interest."

"Yes, and do nothing for it."

"Then there is John the gardener; he has been saving all his life; he has bought some cottages in the village besides his own, and intends to live on the rent when he is past work. Is he an idle, vicious loafer?"

"My point is that he does nothing for his rent. The Duke of Westminster——"

"Never mind the Duke of Westminster, and let me have my point first. There is your sister Blanche, she draws part of that six hundred and fifty million pounds, and Dr. Fraser, who is just retiring from his practice in the village, and your friend Sinclair: are they idle, vicious loafers?"

"Well, no doubt that is rather too sweeping a term——"

"I think so. But about that six hundred and fifty million pounds; do you know anyone who does not get part of it?"

"Oh, yes, plenty; the men at the works, for instance."

"Many of the men at the works belong to their union, and benefit by the union funds, which are invested at interest. Very many of them have private savings invested. There are some, as you say, who never saved a penny in their lives, and who therefore have no share in that six hundred and fifty million pounds. Do you think they are on the whole less idle and vicious than the others, or more so? Which kind would you expect to find most of at the "Green Dragon" on Saturday nights? The fact is, your idle, vicious loafers consist of almost the whole upper and middle classes and the best part of the working class."

"The fact that a working man gets a few shillings of interest does not affect my argument that the capital of the country is mainly in the hands of a small class of people, who have the workers quite at their mercy, who pocket an unfair share of the wealth that the workers have produced, and who do nothing for it."

"They risk their money, and sometimes lose it."

"That's a fallacy. Individual capitalists run a risk, no doubt, by reason of the competition of other capitalists, but the whole class of capitalists run no risk whatever, as can be seen by comparing the statistics of wealth in all civilized countries."

"That certainly is one way of looking at it. Next time you see a man out of work, tell him to cheer up and never mind, because though he may be unemployed by reason of the competition of other workers, the working classes as a whole are employed."

"The two cases are not analogous. The man has a right to work, but the capitalist has no right to money for which he has done nothing."

"It is not correct to say he has done nothing for it. In all except the very best securities he runs an appreciable risk of losing his money, and his rate of payment varies according to the amount of risk. But the chief service for which he is paid is that of saving. I suppose you will admit that capital is necessary to every society above the savage state, and that capital consists of accumulated savings. Our society could not exist unless people had saved. What do you suppose induced them to save?"

"The miser instinct, I suppose."

"No, not the miser instinct. They saved mainly for three reasons: because the interest made it worth while, because they wished to provide for their old age and for their dependants, and because they wished to leave their children provided for. How much saving do you think there will be when you have destroyed all the motives for saving?"

"There is too much capital already. If more were wanted it would be the duty of the State to save it."

"There is not too much capital already, and if there were

it would still be necessary to save, since capital is always being destroyed. As to saving by the State, can you point to a single State in the civilized world that has ever accumulated anything but debts?"

"Capitalist States!"

"You think they would begin to save if they were managed by socialists? Have you ever heard of Poplar and West Ham? Come, Frank; be reasonable! You have studied economics, and you know quite well that the national dividend, the whole wealth available for distribution, is shared between capital and labour in a certain proportion. There is only one way of altering that proportion. The share of capital can only be made less, and the share of labour greater, by making capital cheap; and capital can only be made cheap by making it plentiful. Then the rate of interest falls and the rate of wages rises. What the capitalist does not get must go to the worker, because there is nobody else."

"I have heard all that, and the answer. If capital were doubled to-morrow the rate of interest might fall 1 or 2 per cent., but the capitalists would still have their incomes almost doubled. You don't suppose wages would double?"

"I cannot pretend to say what would happen in such an extreme case; but let us suppose that there has been a socialist revolution in America, and that all the rich men are to bring their capital here 'to-morrow,' as you say, so that the capital of the country is suddenly doubled. I do not say such a thing is possible, but let us suppose it to happen. Now the first thought of the Americans will be to get their capital invested here—to get someone to borrow it and pay them interest for it; and in their anxiety to be beforehand with each other they will offer to lend it at a very low rate of interest indeed. Then all those who are now paying 5 or 6 per cent. interest on the capital they have borrowed will approach the lenders and say, 'Look here, I am offered as much capital as I want at 1 per cent. by these Americans. You must reduce your demand for interest to 1 per cent. or I shall borrow from the Americans and pay

you back what you have lent me. So the rate of interest throughout the country will fall to the level at which the Americans are willing to lend. But the Americans still have their capital uninvested. What are they going to do with it? Evidently they cannot lend it to people who already have as much as they can use. They can only invest it by starting new industries, or by lending it to people who are willing to extend their operations in new directions—that is, by the production of more wealth by the aid of more workers. And of all the wealth that is now produced the capitalists will have a much smaller share, and the workers a much larger share, because the rate of interest will be very low, and there will not be enough workers to go round, so the capitalists will be competing with each other to get workers by offering high wages.

“Of course, if I double my capital I increase my income. But why should you suppose the increased capital to belong to existing capitalists, English or American? Why should we not have a new class of capitalists, namely, the working class? Suppose they began to accumulate capital, and to draw not only the increased wages, but the interest as well?”

“You were saying just now,” answered Frank, “that all the best part of the working class were capitalists. They do what they can, no doubt, and it is wonderful what they have done, considering their opportunities. Do you know that the average wage of the workers is less than £1 a week?—some put it as low as 12s.—that they have to feed, clothe, and house themselves and their families on this wretched sum, and that they have nevertheless contrived to save no less than four hundred million pounds? How much do you think it is possible to save out of an average wage of, say, 18s. a week?”

“I know that it would be possible for the workers to save a hundred million pounds a year, in addition to what they are now saving.”

“How much?”

“A hundred million pounds a year.”

“How in the world do you make that out?”

"They spend that amount in drink."

"The working classes are not the only consumers of alcohol."

"Oh, dear, no. The total drink bill is much more. It was one hundred and sixty-seven million pounds in 1907. A hundred millions is probably a low estimate for the workers. So the savings they have accumulated since the beginning of time amount to about four times as much as they spend in drink each year."

"Oh, well, that may be so, but it is absurd to suggest that they should all become teetotallers all at once."

"My dear Frank, I never thought of suggesting such a thing. There is the very large sum they spend in betting, estimated at another fifty millions, which would no doubt be sufficient to pay for a moderate but not harmful amount of drink. However, it is not necessary to suppose anything so extreme as that they should give up all their betting or all their drink. Let us suppose that only twelve years ago they had reduced their weekly expenditure on drink from 7s., the present average, to 3s. 6d. per family of five persons (including women, children and teetotallers), and had invested the savings at 4 per cent., allowing the interest to accumulate. They would to-day have an additional seven hundred and fifty million pounds to their credit, and thirty million pounds a year would be added to their income. They would belong to the capitalist class you are teaching them to hate and envy. Their wages would be higher, as I have explained, and they would no longer be dependent on charity or the poor law in case of temporary unemployment or other misfortune."

"I see; then your panacea for social ills is the saving of capital by the workers?"

"The people who profess to have a panacea are quacks, and the socialists are the arch quacks. I have no panacea. As I said before, the only way to prevent social ills is to avoid breaking laws. That is a matter for the individual, though he can of course be helped or hindered by the action of the State."

"Then your idea is that the State should compel people to

obey the economic laws, and the millennium would be here ? ”

“No. A man who does what is good for him of his own free will is worth ten men who do it because they are compelled. The State could show the way and induce people to follow it. It does not do so at present, but too often takes the exactly opposite course of offering inducements to law-breaking.”

“The action of the State is wrong-headed enough, especially in encouraging the depredations of the capitalist class, but I suppose that is not what you mean ? ”

“No ; I will give you an instance of what I mean. Of all the evil legislation perpetrated within living memory, there is probably none that will be fraught with more insidious, more far - reaching, and more disastrously demoralizing consequences, than the Old Age Pension Act recently passed. Thriftlessness and improvidence being the besetting sins of the English people, the State has announced that it will give a reward of 5s. a week for life to any man or woman who has reached the age of seventy without saving or making any provision for old age. The full reward will be given only to those who have saved nothing at all, but a smaller reward will be given to those who have made a very inadequate provision, while all who are wrong-headed enough to disregard the Government injunction to be improvident, will be fined by heavy extra taxation. To make quite sure that the utmost possible demoralization will result, they have laid down the wonderful principle that poor relief ceases to be poor relief if you call it by another name. The political foresight of the legislators who perpetrated this piece of folly, is correctly represented by the formula, ‘ Chuck the poor beggar a penny, and ask him to vote for us.’ ”

“Both parties were in favour of it,” said Frank.

“Yes ; the formula of the other party was, ‘ Promise the poor beggar a penny and ask him to vote for us.’ Add that those who gave the penny took it by force from their political opponents, and that those who promised the penny, proposed

to take two pence from the 'poor beggar' by taxing his food, and you have a perfect picture of English statesmanship in social legislation."

"I think you have very little sympathy with the poor."

"I have infinite sympathy with the poor that the next generation will have to deal with, as a result of the sentimental folly of this. I suppose nobody but a legislator would think of reducing poverty by taxing the poor and penalizing thrift."

"That is all very well, but the poor are here, and something must be done; we can't leave them to starve. I have my remedy, but you will not hear of it."

"No, nor any other quack remedy. Between Tariff Reform and Socialism, the country is like to be poisoned with quackery. That the poor are poor is largely due to the quacks who started and developed the poor law. We spend thirty million pounds a year in doles to the poor, and we have more poor than any nation in Europe. If we spent twice as much money, we should have twice as many poor, or more. The two things are cause and effect."

"Oh, well, it is very easy to pour contempt on the honest efforts of well-meaning people to cure terrible evils, but if you offer no remedy yourself your criticism is not very helpful."

"I tell you I am not a quack, and I don't deal in remedies. The only way to prevent social evils is to cease violating moral and economic principles. If you have a sober, industrious, self-reliant people, you need not bother about 'social reform'; none will be needed."

"But how are you going to produce your sober, self-reliant people? By stopping the thirty million pounds doles, and leaving the poor to starve?"

"No. You cannot undo the effect of centuries of demoralizing treatment in a day or a year, and to attempt to do so would be cruel."

"It appears to me your policy amounts to wishing for the millennium, but doing nothing to bring it about."

"Doing nothing is often the most helpful course in social

matters, since doing something too often resolves itself into protecting wrong-doing from its natural consequences. But I don't advocate doing nothing. I will give you an example of the kind of thing that might be done.

"The 'working classes' spend one hundred million pounds a year in drink, and an unknown sum in betting and gambling. By saving a part of that sum they could provide for their old age, and insure themselves against most of the misfortunes to which they are liable. Why don't they save?"

"Many of them have not enough to live on——"

"Remember that hundred millions," interrupted Sir Philip.

"And they lead such wretched lives that they need something to cheer them up."

"That is not the reason. They don't save because, in the first place, they have been diligently taught that if they get into trouble, their neighbours (the State or the parish) will have to help them out. In the second place, and chiefly, because it does not seem worth while. Suppose a man has saved a sovereign—what can he do with it? Invest it at 4 per cent.? There are no such investments for small sums, and even if he could find one, the only result would be that after waiting a year, he would receive in interest ninepence-halfpenny—not enough for a day's beer. It is not an attractive proposition. The thing to make it attractive is—a lottery."

Frank burst out laughing. "Well, father, you do astonish me. You have just been raging at the workers for putting their money on horses, and now you advise them to put it in a lottery."

"You see I am a betting man myself," said Sir Philip.

"I have never known you make a bet in my life."

"You little know your father, Frank. I have just fixed up a big bet with a man in London. He offered to bet me 300 to 1 that my works would not be burnt down this year. I took it on. My stake £100, his £30,000. If the works are burnt down I get his stake; if not, he gets my £100."

"Bah! you mean fire insurance."

"Exactly; but it is betting all the same. Then I put

£1,000 on that patent pump of Thomson's, and lost it. I put £1,500 on the patent suction apparatus, and have got it back several times over. Every business man is constantly staking money on one thing or another. It gives zest and interest to life, and is a principal factor in all industrial progress. But with the workman it is different. At twenty-three he gets his society wage, and for the rest of his life he can hope for nothing more. He is almost certain to be comparatively poor all his life. His gambling instinct is just as strong as yours and mine, and he indulges it in the only way open to him, by betting on horses and losing his money. Then he turns to socialism as a short cut to someone else's money. I say, give him a lottery."

"And if he loses his money in that, will he be any better off?"

"He could not lose his money. The lottery would have to give guarantees of solvency, as in the case of an insurance company. It would borrow money at, say, 3 per cent. in sums of £1; 2 per cent. would be paid in interest, and 1 per cent. in prizes, to be drawn for periodically. The lottery company would invest the money at a higher rate of interest, and so make a profit (as in the case of a bank). The bondholder cannot lose his money. He can sell his bond at any time. He gets interest for his money, and he has a chance of winning a prize, and becoming, comparatively, a rich man, which at present is in most cases impossible. Most important of all, he gets the habit of saving, and has at his command a sum of money, which he is not tempted to squander, but can use in case of need. In many cases he will transfer some of his money to a better investment, when he has accumulated enough to invest. His children will start in life as capitalists, with all the advantages (and dangers) that implies."

"It would be fostering the spirit of gambling."

"Most emphatically no. The spirit of gambling is there. Our wise legislators try to stamp it out by worrying the bookmakers, and gambling goes on increasing year by year. If legislators were not incapable of learning by experience,

they would have found out by now that you cannot stamp out a natural instinct by making laws about it; you may turn it to a healthy and beneficent use. Incidentally, of course, the constant accumulation of capital would force up wages, as I have explained."

"I suppose it is a scheme for getting the worker to put himself into the hands of the capitalist more completely than he is at present."

"My dear fellow, the Whole People would be capitalists, and they would be in the hands of the Whole People. If the workers preferred to invest in co-operative undertakings, or start business enterprises of their own, so much the better."

"Well, it is certainly a wonderful scheme to be advocated by one who has just been inveighing against quackery."

"You evidently do not know what quackery is. Suppose I have a headache. It may come from a disordered liver or stomach, from eye strain, from drink, or a knock on the head. The quack says, 'Take my headache pills, warranted to cure.' He treats the symptom without inquiring what disease produced the symptom, and probably upsets some organ that was healthy before, and makes the headache worse. I go to a doctor, and he says, 'Ha! liver; take exercise—don't eat this or that: remove the cause and the cure will follow.' The doctors were not always so wise. Time was when they had only one universal remedy. Was it a cold or a fever? Bleed the patient. Was it indigestion, rheumatism or gout? Bleed the patient. They gave that up, but it was long before they came to realize that it is beyond human skill to cure the least of bodily ills, even the smallest scratch or bruise. The cure must come from within: the body must heal itself. When they had realized that, the doctors became useful members of society.

"Our social doctors, or so-called Social Reformers, are at present in the first or bleeding stage of the art. Is it unemployment or poverty? Bleed the taxpayer. Is it overcrowding or improvidence? Bleed the patient. Some day they may come to realize that bleeding is not a strengthening or health-giving operation. The time may

even come—but this will be many centuries hence—when they will learn that social ills cannot be cured by the most cunningly concocted legislative nostrums: the body politic must cure itself if it is to be cured. When they have learnt this the Social Reformers, too, may become useful members of society.

“Of course social quackery is very tempting. It seems so obvious to say, ‘Here are poor; take money from the rich and give it to them.’ That is to treat the symptom poverty without inquiring what disease produced the poverty. All history, from the time of ancient Rome down to the present, bears testimony to the fact that that particular socialistic nostrum is the most potent means of aggravating the disease. It always results in producing an army of loafers.”

“So it may, when wrongly applied. But you must remember that socialism could only be brought to pass when the whole people was educated up to it. Do you think it likely that an educated people would think it wise to encourage an army of loafers?”

“Well, as to that, one can only judge by what one sees. The socialist part of the English people at the present day certainly considers it wise to encourage an army of loafers. This is seen in certain notorious districts of London, where the socialist municipal bodies have thought it wise to attract loafers from all over the kingdom, in the farm colonies, right-to-work bills, and other schemes advocated by socialists, which invariably lead to the same result. Generally speaking, the encouragement of loafers is in direct proportion to socialist influence.”

“Socialists working in a capitalist society are at a disadvantage. They did not produce the loafers, but they do their best to alleviate the misery of the human material that the capitalist has rejected as unfit for profit-making. Socialists say that profit-making is an anti-social crime; that all commodities should be produced for use, not for profit, and that the only way to bring this about is to place the means of production in the hands of the State.”

“Confiscate them, in fact?”

“If you like to use that word. The so-called confiscation would be accomplished without causing the slightest hardship or even inconvenience to a single individual. The process would be gradual, and would be so arranged that at the end of, say, twenty years all the means of production would belong to the State, but the former owners, and perhaps even their children, would be given life annuities, equal in amount to their former incomes.”

“I can imagine a capitalist looking askance at a life annuity guaranteed by a socialist State, which would inevitably come to grief in less than five years. I think he would prefer to go elsewhere, taking his capital with him, and trusting to his own efforts for his life annuity.”

“I wondered when that bogey of ‘capital leaving the country’ would come up. I wonder if you have ever thought how it would be managed. Would the capitalists take their property in the form of money? There is only about one hundred million pounds of money in the country, and the capital of the country is one thousand one hundred million pounds. You are a capitalist, and your capital consists mainly of machinery. You could not sell it, because all the other engineers (according to your theory) would be wanting to sell their machinery, and there would be nobody to buy: and even if there were, there is not nearly enough money to exchange for it. I suppose you would make a big raft and put the Vulcan Works on it bodily, pilot it over to the United States, pay the 45 per cent. duty, and proceed to make another fortune.”

“Frank, Frank, I am ashamed of you. Your leaders are, we know, mostly journalists. Their ideas about business are the ideas of journalists, and we can make allowance for them. But you are a man of business, and ought to know better. Let me remind you of one or two familiar facts. When we buy a machine at the works for, say, £100, we make a guess at the length of time that will be required to wear that machine out. Its life may be twenty years. Very well, at the end of the first year we ‘write off’ from our profits one-twentieth of the cost of that machine, that is, £5.

We do not spend that £5, but keep it. At the end of the second year we put aside another £5, and so on, till at the end of twenty years we have saved up £100 with which to buy a new machine. We depreciate all our plant in this way, as you know, and so does every business firm that possesses plant of any description. Now, suppose your socialist scheme were announced, what do you suppose would happen? For my part, I can promise you there would be no more depreciation account at my works. It would be invested in foreign securities—that is, shares in foreign undertakings would be bought and paid for by goods exported, the only way in which one nation does make payment to another in practice. At the end of twenty years I should hand over a tumble-down building full of scrap-iron to your socialist Government. The works would be there, but the capital would have gone abroad, and I should follow it. I would sacrifice the whole of the life annuity, unless, of course, the socialist State liked to post it on to me.”

“Oh, well, the people of this country got on very well before there was any machinery, and I daresay they would do so again until they had made what they wanted. There would be plenty of employment while it was making, and meanwhile they would live on the land. I suppose the landowners do not have to scrap their land every twenty years, and they certainly could not take it with them.”

“I don’t think the landowners would have much more difficulty in sending their capital abroad than the engineers. In some parts of the country there are men who make a profit out of the land in an ingenious way. They take a farm and work it for all it is worth, spending nothing on it and putting nothing into it. After a few years the land is exhausted, and then they move on to another farm. Your socialists would find plenty of employment getting the land into working condition after the owners had left it.”

“Well, no doubt when the time comes it will not be difficult to find a way of dealing with the capitalists. I have merely mentioned one, but others have been suggested; for instance, Blatchford proposes a system of compulsory purchase.

The means of production would be simply bought from their present owners by the State. I suppose you would not call that robbery if the price was fair."

"Ah, yes, I know Mr. Blatchford is a very kind-hearted man. Would there were more like him. But tell me, Frank, did he explain just how the State was going to buy the capital of the country—what form the payment would take, in short?"

"It is some time since I read the matter up. No doubt you will find it all explained in Mr. Blatchford's books. I suppose a loan would have to be raised and gradually paid off."

"I see; then of course you would have to offer interest on the loan?"

"Yes, I suppose so."

"Well, there certainly does seem to be something in this scheme. The State buys the capital of the country from the capitalists. In order to do this it must first borrow the capital of the country from the capitalists to whom it belongs. The State will then hand it over to them in payment for the capital of the country, which it is buying. Of course, it will also pay them interest, and undertake to pay them back the capital of the country which it has borrowed, in a certain number of years. I am not sure that the capitalists will have to leave the country after all. Tell me, Frank, do you happen to know if Mr. Blatchford is a capitalist?"

"I am sure I don't know, and I don't see what it has to do with our argument. My point is that socialists will be quite clever enough to find a way of acquiring the means of production when the time comes. I expect they will begin with the land. I suppose you won't deny that the private ownership of land is an iniquity and an injustice?"

"Well, I happen to own a small amount of land, as you know, but I haven't noticed my conscience keeping me awake at nights. I paid for it, you know."

"You paid for it, yes; but did you make it? Did you create it?"

"I think it is scarcely necessary to answer that question."

"Well then, perhaps you will answer this question. Suppose you write a book. The Government gives you a copyright, a monopoly, on what you have yourself created, for forty-two years or your lifetime. You make an invention, and the Government gives you a patent for fourteen years. You buy a piece of land, and it remains the property of you and your heirs for ever and ever. You created the book and the invention; you did not create the land. Can you tell me any reason why the community should not treat your land as it treats your book and your invention, and resume possession after, say, twenty years?"

"No, not the slightest reason. Provided, of course, the community gives or sells me the land on the distinct understanding that I am only to have it for twenty years. But I should not give a very big price for it, I think."

"You know very well that it is not a question of your buying land from the community, but of the community buying land from you and other landowners."

"Ah, now I begin to understand. Is this another of Mr. Blatchford's schemes?"

"It is advocated by him, among others."

"Do give me the details; I should so like to understand the scheme."

"There is not much difficulty in understanding it. The community will buy the land, and hold it for the use of the community."

"I see. Do you happen to know the value of all the land?"

"No, I don't."

"I am sorry I don't either. Suppose we put it at one thousand million pounds.¹ Do you think that would be unreasonable?"

"Yes, I don't think the community should give so much, seeing that the present owners have no right to it."

"Halve it, then—anything to meet you; what do you say to five hundred million pounds?"

"That is more reasonable."

"Very well, we are agreed at last. The community is

¹ The estimated value of the land in the United Kingdom was £1,691,000,000 in 1885.

going to buy all the land, through the community's agent, the Government, for the sum of five hundred million pounds. How is the Government going to raise the money?"

"Just in the same way that it always does raise money, I suppose."

"Well, I think the Government generally raises money by taxes, doesn't it?"

"Yes."

"Then at last I think we have got to the bottom of Mr. Blatchford's scheme. The Government is going to raise five hundred million pounds by taxes. The taxes will be paid by the landowners, the capitalists, and the workers. As it raises this large sum, it will hand it over to the landowners. They will then no longer own the land, but will have to pay rent for it out of the interest on the money the Government has paid them. They won't like that. But how about the working men and women? They will have paid very heavy taxes for a great many years; they will have gone without many things they would like to have, but at last their sacrifices are rewarded by—what? a change of landlords! Just think of it, Frank. Think of the glory of the workman's wife when a real live tax-collector from a Government office comes round for the rent on Monday morning! And think of the delight of getting the front parlour walls papered. Shall we draw a fancy picture? There will be no more of that contemptible sending round to the landlord in the next street. No, our friend will send in an application to the Home Office Wall Papering Department. After a certain interval, which may not be more than three weeks, he will receive by post a large envelope, 'On His Majesty's Service.' Eagerly tearing it open, he will find six large printed forms, foolscap size, four blue and two buff. By the time he has filled up these forms, with the aid of the neighbours, he will feel rather as if he had turned himself inside out, but it is done at last, and he posts back the forms in another envelope, 'On His Majesty's Service.' Having done this he will wait. He may wait one month, or two months, or three. No matter, all things come to him who waits, and one fine (or wet) morning the Government will come to our friend. And

there will be no mistake about it. There will be a beautiful large lorry with two horses and ten men in charge. They will proceed to put our friend and his belongings into the street, while they decorate his walls with a paper embodying all the well-known artistic taste of the Government Official. Let us draw a veil over his bliss. Did you ever see the Government machine gather up its strength, and really get to work to pull out a tin tack? I have seen it, and it is a sight for the gods."

"H'm! It seems the landowners are to come off as well as the capitalist. It is rather strange that they do not give a more hearty welcome to the socialists who are going to confer all these benefits on them."

"The socialists are not going to confer benefits on anyone. All will suffer, because, whereas under the present system the land and the means of production are on the whole well and cheaply managed, under socialism they would be badly and expensively managed, and the loss due to bad management will fall on the workers. Socialism will hit everyone in the country, but it will not be the landowner and the capitalist who will be hardest hit."

"No doubt it will be very terrible, but at any rate it won't be so bad as the present system. May I remind you that out of our national income of one thousand seven hundred and fifty million pounds, more than a third, or six hundred million pounds, is taken by 250,000 persons, while the remainder is divided over 44 million persons. That only one person in 90 leaves property worth taxing when he dies—that six hundred and fifty million pounds of the national income——"

"Spare me!" interrupted Sir Philip, "I declare you socialists are all alike. As soon as one tries to find out how you are going to apply your wonderful system, he is deluged with facts and figures about what you call 'capitalism.' You socialists are a funny people. One piece of advice I would like to give to all of you. Leave off discussing capitalism, and turn your attention to a subject to which you appear to have devoted very little thought and attention so far—I

mean the subject of socialism. You will find it contains possibilities you never dreamed of. Hullo, Blanche, are you there?"

"Yes, father; I have been sitting here sewing for the last half-hour. I have been listening to you and Frank, and thinking what funny creatures men are. If you want to see whether socialism is a good thing or not, why don't you try it?"

"Well, you see, my dear," answered Sir Philip, "it would be rather a serious thing to turn the whole of the existing social and industrial arrangements upside down, in order to try an experiment which, in the opinion of most people, would be foredoomed to failure."

"Oh, I don't suggest that you should upset any existing arrangements, though I think some of them might be upset without much harm. I mean, try an experiment on a small scale somewhere—where, it does not matter."

"Not at the works, please," said Sir Philip hastily. "We have had enough of that."

"No; but why not here, on St. Michael's? The people here are very decent on the whole, and many of them quite poor. They will do anything for me, and I am sure they would be socialists if I asked them."

"I am quite sure they would profess socialism, or Moham-medanism, or anything else, to please you," said Frank, smiling at his sister's well-founded boast; "but unfortunately it is not merely a matter of professing socialism to please someone else. People must have their social instincts educated; they must want socialism for its own sake before it can succeed, and even then it will take years, and perhaps generations, before a perfect socialist State can be evolved. The work of socialists to-day is to educate the people; to make them see the advantages of socialism, so that they may live for it and aspire to it, as we do."

"Oh, well, I suppose there are plenty of people who do live for it and aspire to it, as you say. Why not bring them here and see how they get on?"

"I am afraid there might be a little difficulty in housing them," said Frank; "and even if there were not, it would be

impossible to try an experiment under fair conditions, because though there are plenty of socialists, it is doubtful if those who have lived all their lives amid the traditions and conventions of capitalism could shake themselves free from the old degrading associations and adapt themselves to the conditions of a perfect socialist State. Their children or grandchildren might."

"Well, at any rate," said Blanche, as she threw her work into the basket by her side, "do come out of this stuffy, smoky room. It is a perfect evening, and the sun will be setting over Gannet in half an hour. Come for a stroll on the cliff."

Blanche threw a light wrap round her shoulders, and the two men followed her down the sloping path that led to the top of the cliff. It was, as she had said, a perfect evening. The sun, looking twice his natural size, was slowly sinking through a cloudless sky. A light breeze scented with honeysuckle refreshed the senses, and a flock of seagulls wheeled overhead and far down the cliff, their mocking, laughing cries mingling with the never-ending murmur of the waves.

With father and brother on either side, Blanche made her way along the edge of the precipitous cliff. For awhile the three strolled on in silence, which was at length broken by the elder man.

"You are right, Frank, about the housing difficulty, and of course such an experiment is in any case impossible, but not, I think, for the reason you give. Nobody expects socialists to be angels; and if we are to wait till we can get together a community of perfect human beings before we can try an experiment under fair conditions, we may as well give up talking about socialism altogether. You seem to me to have missed this important point. The present scheme of society is a continuance of the natural order of evolution, according to which the best specimens tend to survive, and the worst to go under, the wrong-doers (moral and economic) to be punished, and the right-doers to be rewarded. There are of course many and grievous exceptions, but the general tendency is as I have said; consequently the

capitalist or competitive system contains within itself a force constantly making for progress, for improvement. Man has existed under a competitive system for perhaps a thousand centuries. At the beginning of that time he was a brute beast, and by the force of competition he has been raised to his present not very advanced state of civilization. But during the last century of the thousand he has existed under the industrial system, with competition greatly intensified, and in that short period he has made more progress than in any one hundred centuries of the time that went before. There has been a steady advance in the standard of life, character, education, and comfort, especially among the poorer classes. Taking only the last thirty years—Hyndman estimates that since 1880 wages have risen 20 per cent., and the purchasing power of money has increased 30 per cent., so that a man who in 1880 was earning 20s. a week, now gets the equivalent of 31s. 6d. a week for the same work. Short-sighted philanthropists and ‘Social Reformers’ have done much to counteract the progressive force, by making the way of the transgressor easy, shielding him from the result of his transgression, and placing it on the shoulders of those who have not transgressed. In this way they have retarded progress, but they have not stopped it.

“That the condition of society is improving, and may be expected to improve under the competitive industrial system, you yourself evidently admit, since you hold that this system must be allowed to continue until society has so improved as to be fit for socialism.

“Now, my fundamental objection to socialism is this—that it will, in my opinion, entirely counteract and actually reverse the progressive principle; that any society which came under the influence of socialism, even though it were perfect to begin with, would immediately begin to deteriorate, to progress backwards, and that it would continue to get worse until the progressive principle of competition was re-introduced. This I do not expect you to admit; but I think you will agree that if it were possible to collect together a number of socialists who are satisfactory members of society under

our present system, if these socialists were formed into a community by themselves, under socialistic conditions, then it would be possible to judge whether socialism has or has not the self-destructive principle I attribute to it. If I am right, then this experimental community would begin at once to progress backwards, to deteriorate in character, and it would ultimately fall to pieces. Socialism would then stand condemned, since it would be proved that whereas the competitive system produces progress, socialism destroys progress and produces retrogression. If, on the other hand, you are right in thinking socialism a better principle than individualism and competition, then our experimental community of socialists would progress as fast or faster than the individualist community from which the members were drawn, and socialism would be vindicated. The question is, not whether they would form a perfect society, but whether they would progress forwards or backwards. Do you follow?"

Frank walked on in silence for several minutes before replying. His sister apparently found the discussion a little tiresome, and amused herself by plucking a handful of the wild flowers that grew in profusion beside the path. Sir Philip watched the flight of a flock of seagulls that had been disturbed by the intruders on their domain, and were wheeling far down the cliff, filling the air with their monotonous cries. At last Frank turned to his father. "Yes," he said; "I do not see anything unreasonable in what you say. I would be content to let socialism stand or fall by the result of such an experiment, provided it could be carried out under fair conditions. As to what you say about competition causing progress, I do not admit it for a moment. Progress has only come as man's social instincts have developed. It has come in spite of, not because of, competition. I am convinced that under the conditions of socialism a new type of mankind will evolve, which will surpass the highest type which culture has produced up to now. An overman if you please, not as an exception, but as the rule. The idea that philanthropists and social reformers have retarded progress is simply ludicrous."

“Look at those gulls,” said Sir Philip, pointing out over the edge of the cliff. “What beautiful creatures they are—every one of them strong, perfect, healthy, self-sufficient, fulfilling its function and enjoying its life! How many are there? Two hundred, perhaps. Take two hundred human beings at random from any part of England, and what proportion of them will you find strong, perfect, healthy, free, performing a useful function and enjoying life? And what is the reason of the contrast? In the one case the law of Nature acts unimpeded—the fittest survive and reproduce. In the other case, the whole effort of society is directed towards enabling the unfit to survive and reproduce. Can you wonder at the result? Truly Nature is stern, but in the long run kind; man is sentimental, but in the long run cruel.”

“What nonsense people talk about the survival of the fittest!” said Frank. “The fittest to survive is as often as not the fittest to destroy, to cheat, to enslave his fellow creatures. The survival of the fittest is a wonderful principle, and of course its influence on the evolution of the lower animals, and even of man himself up to a certain stage, cannot be denied; but it is too often forgotten that under its influence weeds are produced as well as flowers, black cormorants as well as white seagulls, dogfish as well as herrings, grasping exploiters of human labour as well as industrious, skilful workmen who are their victims.”

“What you say is perfectly just,” said Sir Philip. “Nature does not discriminate between her creatures. The loathsome insect, the destructive vermin, the deadly bacillus, all have an equal chance with the noblest animals of creation. There are no favourites with Nature. But is there any reason why man should not discriminate? Has he not shown himself capable of discriminating? Look at his dealings with his domestic animals. Does he not ruthlessly destroy the unfit and breed from the fit? Not the fit to destroy their fellows, but the fit as judged by man’s own standard of perfection. Look at a well-kept flock of sheep, cattle, poultry, and tell me whether his action is in the long run productive of suffering or the reverse. In his dealings with

domestic animals, man, like Nature, is stern, but kind. Only in his dealings with his fellow men is he sentimental, and cruel. Those who survive by violence or fraud he deals with rigorously enough in his law courts, but the unfit—their survival he makes his special care.”

“I think what you say is simply horrible,” interposed Blanche. “Do you really advocate the killing off, the slaughtering of men and women who are ‘unfit’ according to your ‘ideal of perfection’?”

“Ah! there you have me,” said Sir Philip. “Some time in the future, when the Anglo-Saxon race has sentimentalized or socialized itself out of existence, there may arise a race of men strong enough to deal with this matter—not indeed by killing, but by milder and no less effective measures. The unfit must not be allowed to reproduce. At present it cannot be done, but something can and must be done. We must put an end to all those demoralizing influences which have been set at work by well-intentioned but short-sighted people, and whose immediate aim is to shield the wrongdoer from the consequences of his misdeeds, and to give the unfit a special chance of survival at the expense of the fit. We must learn to permit the suffering of the individual in our own generation, when by so doing we can reduce the suffering of the race in the next.”

“Well, for my part, I don’t intend to follow your advice,” said Blanche. “I shall do whatever I can to alleviate suffering wherever I see it, no matter how it was caused.”

“That I think quite possible,” said her father; “and there will be many like you. All I ask you to remember is that in doing so you are not acting humanely. To contemplate a given amount of present suffering is more painful to you than to contemplate a larger amount of suffering in the future. You choose the course which causes less pain to yourself, and more pain to others. Charity of this kind is not humanity, but selfishness; not the most ignoble form of selfishness certainly, but still selfishness, and of all the forms of selfishness, it is the one which is causing and has caused the greatest amount of human misery.”

“ You are evidently a great believer in the blessedness of suffering,” said Frank bitterly. “ For my part, I think it more unselfish to right wrongs wherever you see them, and it will be the aim of my life to bring about a state of society in which suffering shall be abolished. That is the aim of socialism.”

“ I agree with you that the diminution of human suffering is the noblest aim to which a man can devote his life, but if you think to accomplish it by artificially abolishing suffering, I am afraid you will be grievously disappointed. Let me tell you a true story. A scientist once made an experiment with a rabbit. He destroyed its sensory nerves and set it free. The rabbit could run and play and eat, it could enjoy life like its fellows, but it could not feel pain. Surely it was the most fortunate rabbit in the whole world ! But in a day or two the rabbit was dead. It had knocked and scratched and cut itself to pieces. It did the things a rabbit ought not to do, and, feeling no pain, it went on doing them. It died because it could not suffer. One can conceive a society whose members were not allowed to suffer for their wrong and foolish acts, but that society would not be far from dissolution.”

The sun was setting in a glory of crimson splendour as the three made their way homeward. They walked in silence, occupied in thought. As they entered the house Blanche murmured, “ All the dreadful things you say about socialism may be true—but I wish it could be tried.” And the two men echoed her wish.

Part II

THE PREPARATIONS

CHAPTER I.

THE WILL.

Letter from Frank Ledingham to Walter Sinclair.

DEAR WALTER,—Many thanks for your letter, and for all the sympathy it expresses. My father's death has indeed been a blow to me. He was a good man, and a true friend to me. We differed acutely on some questions, as you know, but, although such differences must always be painful, they did not in the least interfere with our affection.

I have had so many things to see to during the last few weeks, that I have scarcely had time to make plans for the future; but since the reading of my father's strange will, I have been longing to talk things over with you. I expect you have seen some account of the will in the papers, and in that case you will not be surprised when I tell you that I cannot yet realize what it all means. The will was made about a month before his death, and soon after a long discussion we had together. I think he must have been largely influenced by what was said on that occasion, in making these extraordinary provisions.

Briefly, it amounts to this. He leaves the whole to Blanche and me, and the property is a very large one—much larger than I could have expected. Blanche is to have her share at once, but I cannot touch mine for three years. He leaves a large sum, part of my share, to be applied in founding a socialist colony on the island of St. Michael. Knowing what an extreme individualist he was, I can scarcely realize that it is true, though I see pretty clearly what was his real object. As to details, I will go into these fully when I see you. The main provisions are, that a village with accommodation for 10,000 persons is to be built at once, with all the necessary workshops and public buildings for a self-contained community or miniature State, in

which the inhabitants will produce all that is required for their own use. The land is, as you know, very fertile, though it has never been thoroughly cultivated. During the first year, which is to be devoted to building and preparing the village, a sufficient acreage of land is to be tilled and sown, to produce food for the colony. The present inhabitants are to be bought out, and sent to the mainland with generous compensation. The new inhabitants are to be picked socialists—that is to say, volunteers are to be invited from all parts of the country, and their antecedents are to be carefully investigated before they can be accepted. They must all be people of good character, who can produce satisfactory references from employers or other responsible persons. They are in the first place to be nominated for membership, and after nomination a list of them is to be submitted to each of the nominees, who will be asked to cross out the names of any persons whom they consider unsuitable for membership. Any person who is vetoed by ten or more nominees will cease to be eligible for membership, so that all the members will have been approved by each other. The leaders of the English socialist party are to be invited to join. The members will be asked to sign an undertaking that they will live in Newæra (that is to be the new name of St. Michael's) with their families for two years, and that they will be faithful to socialist principles during that time. They are to be invited, but not compelled, to hand over their property to the colony. I am appointed Dictator during the year of preparation, and am empowered to get together a committee of socialists to investigate the character of the applicants, and to advise with me as to details of the management of the colony. After the colony has been actually established for three months my Dictatorship is to cease and my committee to be dissolved. A Parliament of thirty members is then to be elected to manage the colony and make the laws. There is to be a second election six months later, and after that elections will be held as often as the people desire.

Beyond these general provisions there is very little, except that after two years' working there is to be a vote of the

whole colony on the question of continuing the experiment or giving it up. If it is decided to continue, the island and all it contains is to become the absolute property of the colonists. If they decide not to go on, the property reverts to me.

Now, Walter, I have told you all about it, and I want you to run over and help me to think it out. Don't delay, please; come on Friday, and, more than that, arrange to stay. I want you to be my Chief Adviser, Prime Minister, Secretary of State and Lord High Everything Else. I can't promise you a big salary, and of course, when the election takes place, you and I will have to take our chance with the rest. But I know you will come. Just think of it—we are to be the model on which the future civilization of the world will be shaped. That is, if we succeed—but I know we shall succeed. The responsibility is terrific. Do come, there's a good fellow. I know you are more than half a socialist, and you will soon be a whole one. Blanche is as excited about it as I am, and she joins me in begging you to come.

Your old chum,

FRANK.

Walter Sinclair to Frank Ledingham.

DEAR FRANK,—Allow me to commend you for a cool hand. You ask a fellow to throw up his livelihood and help to boss your Gilbert and Sullivan State at two days' notice. What if your committee doesn't approve of my antecedents? However, I will be with you on Friday, and if you think my views sufficiently advanced, I will try my luck with you. I am fairly disgusted with things as they are, and I think it would be a tremendously important step if we could show the world how sensible people can live together without cutting each other's throats. At the worst, Newæra is a charming spot, and I shall have your company. I suppose Miss Ledingham takes part in the experiment? So good-bye till Friday.

Your obedient Minister,

WALTER.

P.S.—If you are arranging about my robes of office, please don't choose purple. I hate it.

CHAPTER II.

THE CONSTITUTION.

IT was with a light heart and a bounding step that Frank Ledingham went down to the jetty to meet his old friend Walter Sinclair. The arrival of the little steamer from the mainland was the great daily event in the life of St. Michael's, and a group of bronzed seamen and sturdy farmers, with a sprinkling of old men and children, was gathered at the landing place, their eyes fixed on the little boat with her trail of black smoke as she laboured through the heavy sea.

Frank and Walter had first met at college, and the close friendship they had formed there had been kept up during the few years that had elapsed since Frank left to take his place in the Vulcan Works, and Walter to take up an uneventful and hitherto brief career as a barrister in London. There had been a regular correspondence between the two friends, and Walter had spent more than one well-remembered holiday with the Ledingham family at St. Michael's. On these occasions there had been long and earnest discussions as to the possibilities and prospects of a higher and healthier social system. In these discussions Frank's ardent advocacy of the one untried remedy for social ills had been met by the searching but not unfavourable criticism of his clear-headed and less impulsive friend, while Blanche was, as a rule, a silent but sympathetic listener.

As the steamer hove to beside the little stone jetty, Walter's tall, alert figure emerged from the little crowd on her deck, and as he sprang ashore Frank met him with outstretched hand.

"Well, this is really good of you," he said, taking his friend's portmanteau and making his way through the

bustling throng. "I am afraid I have taken an unfair advantage of your generosity in dragging you away from your work."

"Oh, as to that, my work consisted chiefly of waiting for something to turn up, which it never did; and after all, one does not get the offer of a Prime Ministership every day. Have you any idea what led your father to place you in this extraordinary position? Did he come round to your views after all?"

"No, I don't think he came round at all. You see, it was like this. We were having a grand set-to on the old subject, and it was suggested—by Blanche, I think—that an experiment should be tried to show how socialism would work in practice. I said, of course, that people were not ready for it yet, and he replied by asking whether the socialists were not ready for it. He pointed out that there are any number of socialists who are very good citizens in the capitalist community, and he suggested that if a number of them, all picked men, were brought together with their families into a socialist community, it would be easy to see whether they would be equally good citizens under the new conditions."

"But what did he expect to prove by that? Is there any possible reason to suppose they would be worse citizens under socialism than under capitalism?"

"I don't think so, but he apparently did. He said there was in socialism a self-destructive principle, which would bring any such society to grief in a short time. He once said that if you introduced socialism among the angels in heaven, and called on them two years later, you would think you had come to the wrong place. He said that under capitalism society is improving—I don't see much sign of improvement myself—and that if socialism is as good a system, then the socialist society would improve and progress at least as fast, in which case socialism would be justified; but that if it turned out that he was right about his self-destructive principle, then the society of people who had been proved to be good citizens would speedily become a society of bad citizens, in which case socialism would be condemned. I

could not see anything to find fault with in that argument, and told him so, and I suppose that is what set his mind on this scheme."

"Well," said Walter, "I only hope the capitalists will acknowledge socialism to be justified by such a simple experiment. If so, I think the battle is won."

"I think so too," said Frank, "but we must be very careful not to make any mistakes, and that is why I want to thresh out the scheme with you before broaching it to the public, and to the prominent socialists, on whom we shall have to depend for a good deal of assistance. But here we are at the Hall, and there is Blanche waiting to welcome you. A truce to business until you have had some dinner; you must be ravenous after the tossing you have had."

The meal was a cheerful one. The three young people were all in good spirits, and full of the great experiment which was to occupy the next three years at least, and probably the rest of their lives. Many were the speculations as to the attitude of the great world towards their object-lesson in the art of living "each for all, and all for each." Many were the suggestions for introducing the new way of life among those who are so strangely enamoured of the modern scramble for wealth, and the empty display of the fruits of others' toil.

Dinner being over, the three friends retired to the cosy little study, which was Frank's usual habitat when he was staying on the island. Producing a copy of his father's will, and a good supply of foolscap paper, on one sheet of which he had set down a number of headlines for discussion, Frank proceeded at once to business.

"The first matter to be settled," he said, as he took his seat at the writing-table, "is the Committee of Management, and under this heading I have a proposal to make. It is extremely important that we shall make a fair start, and that the success of the experiment shall not be endangered through differences of opinion and divided counsels. The one danger I see ahead of our little pilot boat is the rock of jealousy. It cannot be denied that there are considerable differences of

opinion among our leaders on several important points of socialist policy, and I therefore propose that the Committee of Management consist of the present company, and nobody else."

"Won't that be likely to cause jealousy?" said Walter.

"Less, I think, than any other arrangement. We shall of course consult the leaders on any difficult point, and follow the advice that seems the wisest, but we shall avoid all quarrelling, and if any ill-feeling does arise, we can point out that the management of the colony after the first three months will rest entirely with the Parliament that will be elected by the whole people. If any of our arrangements are unacceptable, they can be altered according to the will of the people."

"I hope you don't intend to include me in the Committee," said Blanche. "I am quite ignorant of economics, and know very little of politics or socialism, so I can't be of any use."

"Oh, nonsense!" said Frank. "The most important social and economic questions are settled in England by men who are absolutely ignorant of economics and sociology. Women cannot be more ignorant, so why should not they help in the decision? You are duly elected."

Blanche bowed submission.

"The next point," said Frank, "is the Selection Committee. We have to get together 10,000 people, and every one of them is to be a socialist, or the wife or child of a socialist. All must be of irreproachable character—people who are living decent useful lives under the capitalist system. The work of selection will be very heavy, and I propose to advertise for, say, twenty volunteers."

"Paid?" said Walter.

"Yes, I think we ought to pay, and pay well. We are not limited in the matter of the expenses of starting the colony. I think we ought to be prepared to pay at least £4 or £5 a week in order to get men of standing and capacity. Perhaps some well-to-do socialists will give their services, but many will not be able to afford it.

"Then as to the members themselves. The method of

selection is laid down in the will, and seems good. I propose to advertise in the principal socialist papers for volunteers."

"I suppose we shall have to pay some attention to occupation," said Walter. "We don't want the colony full of nothing but navvies, or poets, and we must have a fair proportion of women. I suppose there are plenty of women socialists?"

"Oh, plenty. I think we had better simply advertise in the first place; we shall get many more volunteers than we can accept. The Selection Committee can then choose the proper proportion of each occupation, using the census returns as a guide, and of course eliminating all useless occupations, such as bankers, merchants, lawyers, and domestic servants. If we have 2,000 to 3,000 men of suitable occupations, their wives and families will make up the 10,000."

"But won't you have any unmarried women whose fathers are not socialists?" put in Blanche.

"Yes, we certainly must. Let us say 1,500 married men, making 7,500 with wives and families, and 1,250 each unmarried men and women."

"How about accommodation?" said Walter. "You wouldn't give each unmarried woman a house to herself?"

"Oh no, that will settle itself. Some of the girls will club together, also some of the men. Others will lodge with families. There will be a co-operative eating-hall for those who like to use it."

"What about the marriage laws?" said Walter. "Some of the leaders say there should be no laws, only customs."

"I was coming to that," Frank replied. "We must be careful not to create any prejudice or scandal. I think it will be best, at first at any rate, simply to follow the present practice. We can have a registrar authorized by the English Government in the ordinary way—in fact, we shall have to remain under the Head Government in all such matters, nominally, at least. Of course, laws that nobody breaks are, as it were, non-existent, and I expect that will be the case with most of the old laws. But so much harm has been

done to the cause by the 'free love' that socialists are said to favour, that I think we had better not interfere with the present practice of civil marriage.

"Another point is the care and education of children. It has been suggested that the mother is the natural and best educator, and that the matter should be left to her."

"I think that is absolute nonsense," said Blanche. "The teaching faculty is a rare gift, and even those who possess it are generally least successful with their own children."

"Well, we have plenty of schemes to choose from," said Frank, "ranging from complete control by the mother to complete control by the State. We can't follow all the leaders, so suppose we take a middle course—provide State schools, but leave the mothers free to educate their own children if they wish. It will be to the interest of every citizen to produce good citizens, and the mother who feels herself incompetent will naturally have recourse to the State school."

This course was agreed to and duly noted down.

"We now come to the question of payment," Frank proceeded; "and in the first place, are we to have any money or not? There is a great diversity of opinion on this point. What do you think, Walter?"

"I think it will be a great convenience to have some form of coinage," Walter replied. "I know it has been suggested that there should be no money, but that each citizen should help himself to what he requires from the common store. The first colonists will certainly not be angels, and I think to adopt such a scheme would be to court disaster. Suppose we had some neat checks stamped out of aluminium. Each would be in fact an order on the common store for goods of a definite value. The checks could be of different values, corresponding to our present coinage."

"That would certainly be a convenient system," said Frank, "but I foresee a danger. Some individuals might save, and even lend their savings on interest, and so we should have the capitalist system beginning again."

"You could get over that," suggested Blanche, "by having a date stamped on each check, and providing that a check issued in January, say, would cease to have any value after the end of February. Nobody could save then."

"An ingenious idea," said Frank, "but there would be this disadvantage. Suppose a man wanted a suit of clothes: he would have to save up for it, and that would be impossible, because his savings would lose their value when they were a month old."

"I should be disposed to risk the danger of introducing capitalism," said Walter. "All the Newærans will be socialists, and sufficiently alive to the curse of capitalism. Besides, socialism will change human nature. The opportunity makes the man. Socialism will take away the desire of accumulating riches. The possession of riches will be a superfluous burden, which no sane man will wish to bear."

"Well, then, we will risk it," agreed Frank. "After all, we shall not be going beyond the book. Suthers, for instance, says, 'Under socialism a man's savings would be his own, just as now.'"

"That point being settled," said Walter, "we have to decide on the amount each worker is to receive. Will all incomes be equal?"

"There is a great difference of opinion on that point," Frank replied. "Personally I think when all have enough all will be contented, and all the more so if all fare alike. As to the amount of payment, of course that will be merely a matter of arithmetic. The people will have all they produce. Account will be kept of all goods produced, and there will be a yearly stocktaking. The goods will be valued according to the time spent in producing them. The Treasury will simply ascertain the value of the goods produced in a year, and divide that value by the number of workers. Then each will receive weekly during the next year £10 or £15, or whatever his share may be, the wages of each year being calculated on the production of the preceding year."

"Will the women work?" asked Blanche.

"Yes, certainly. Married women will, of course, attend to their household duties. Children under sixteen will attend to their education. Unmarried women will work, and will of course, be paid at the same rate as men."

"That will be splendid!" said Blanche. "Then I suppose I shall earn £10 or £15 a week, but I don't just know what I shall work at. I never earned anything in my life. It seems to me I shall be a good deal better off than a man with a wife and family, if he only gets as much as I do."

"Oh, of course that would not be so," said Frank. "'To each according to his needs'—that is the rule. Suppose a single man or woman received 30s. a week, then a man with a family would receive, say, £1 extra for his wife, and 10s. extra for each child under sixteen. Above that age, they will earn."

"On the face of it that seems fair," said Walter, "but in practice I am afraid it will cause some jealousy. For instance, a single man would get 30s., and the man next to him, doing the same work, if he happened to have a wife and six children, would get £5 10s."

"Perhaps I have put the family allowance rather high," Frank admitted. "Suppose we say 30s. for the workers, 10s. for the wife, and 5s. for each child. Of course there will be considerable difference of income, but it will only correspond to the difference in necessary expenditure. I propose that we start with these rates of pay. When the actual production has been ascertained, they will be enormously higher. On the average the ratio of unpaid to paid labour in a country such as England is three or four to one—that is to say, the worker, for every hour he works for himself, works three or four for the benefit of other people who may or may not do any useful work at all. If a man can earn 30s. a week under such conditions, he can evidently earn £4 10s. to £6 a week when he has the whole produce of his labour. With production scientifically and socially organized, the productivity of labour will be quintupled, and the amount of wealth will be increased in proportion, so that it is reasonable to expect that in the second or third year

each worker will receive £20 to £30 a week in wages. But this extra productivity may not come all at once, and we had better begin on the safe side. Thirty shillings is certainly a poor wage to start with, but probably the goods produced will soon begin to accumulate to an enormous extent, and when this happens it will be safe to make an advance without waiting for the yearly balance: a sort of interim dividend can be paid.

"I think that is all we need decide about payments at present. Of course the sick, infirm, and old will be paid at the same rate as the workers. The State will be a large family. When a member of the family is ill or helpless, the family go to his assistance. There will be plenty for all—more than they want."

Walter appeared to be lost in thought during the latter part of Frank's speech. "Don't you think," he said, "that there may be some difficulty with shirking and idling? We must remember that we shall be dealing with human beings, not angels, and if the State guarantees everyone a good living, there will surely be some temptation to take advantage."

"No," said Frank promptly. "There will be no danger of that kind. There may be men who would rather go to sleep in the sun like pigs than do healthy and interesting work, but if there are such men, they will have sense enough not to own their folly. Why, they would not be *respected*."

"Well, that is no doubt true," said Walter rather doubtfully; "but still, money is a great incentive, and I should doubt whether the people will work just as well if they have nothing to gain by working well. You cannot alter human nature."

"I do not propose to try. It is only necessary to make the best of human nature as it stands, and to do that, it is only necessary to alter the conditions. Do you think that Socrates, Aristotle, St. Paul, Copernicus, Caxton, Newton, Darwin, Nelson, and the rest of the world's benefactors and heroes worked and died for money? What men desire and

work for is not money, but the pleasure and ease and approbation that money brings. In Newæra everyone will have these things in abundance, and I have not the slightest fear of the result. I expect it to work, as it does work now the whole world over, successfully."

"There is a good deal in what you say," Walter assented. "At any rate, we can try the experiment. What is the next item on your programme?"

"The next heading is, division and organization of labour. But before we deal with that, it will be well to decide what classes of work shall be done. Newæra will, of course, produce goods for the consumption of the Newærans; but there will be some things which must be imported—raw cotton, tea, cocoa, some drugs, and minerals. Fortunately we have coal on the island, though it has never been efficiently worked. Now, in order to get supplies of the things we cannot produce, we shall have to export some of our surplus products to the mainland in exchange. We shall certainly grow much more corn than we can possibly eat, and with the aid of modern machinery there will be a great surplus of manufactured goods produced. Four men in West America produce food for 1,000 persons, and one woman produces cloth in twelve months to clothe 100 people. We shall have to carry on a certain amount of export and import business, not for profit of course, but by way of exchanging our surplus products for things we cannot produce. We shall open an account with a London bank for convenience, but as far as Newæra is concerned, there will be no money transactions, simply an exchange of goods. We shall have to employ some Newærans on the mainland, selling our goods, and buying others."

"But according to that," objected Blanche, "you will be introducing the industrial system again, with its whirring and grinding machinery, its monotonous uninteresting toil, its poisonous fumes and soul-destroying noise and dirt. I thought socialists were supposed to make their own furniture, paint their own pictures, build their own houses with bricks of their own making from clay that they have themselves dug

and carried. I am sure I have read that in some of the books."

"Oh, yes, no doubt you have," said Frank smiling. "You see there are socialists who are fond of painting fancy pictures, and sometimes they say rather foolish things. We are not setting up one of the usual socialist Utopias, where all the women are beautiful, all the men athletic, all the thorn bushes always covered with peach blossom, and where the people do nothing but talk about capitalism all day long. We have actually to set up a State and make it work, and we have only two alternatives to choose from. Either we must teach all the people the art of making wigwams and living in them—living, in fact, the life of the very few and very degraded savages who actually do all their own work, without division of labour—or, we must take advantage of all the inventions and resources of modern civilization, and keep to the modern system of manufacture. Of course there would be no objection to any of the people making their own furniture and clothes, and building their own houses, but we cannot count on getting together a whole nation of skilful cabinetmaker-bricksetter-weaver-tailors; and even if we could, each man would have to have a whole city of factories and thousands of pounds' worth of machinery to make the ordinary everyday articles that one finds in a modern house. I see nothing for it but to adopt the factory system."

"Well, that seems to bring us to your next heading," said Walter. "Of course there will be no masters and servants, but there must be a good deal of organization of labour. In such a small State as Newæra, I suppose there will be only one factory of each kind, with a superintendent in charge, and in the case of large factories, a foreman to each fifty or one hundred workers, as the case may be, and the foremen and superintendents will be paid at the same rate as the workers under them."

"We have decided on equal pay," said Frank, "and there will be no under or over. All will be equal. Some of the leaders say every man will be free to do the work he chooses, but obviously that would not work. To suppose that the

industrial affairs of a complicated industrial State can be run without strict subordination and discipline, and without obedience to orders, is to dream, not of socialism, but of anarchism. At the same time there will certainly be much less superintendence required than in capitalist industry, because everyone will be working for himself. A very small share of the profits arising from associated labour acts as a tremendous stimulus to each individual producer. I do not suppose we shall require more than one superintendent for each of our factories, but of course there will have to be superintendents of superintendents, who will be controlled by a sort of Board of Industry, whose function it will be to decide the kind and quantity of goods produced."

"But who will appoint all these superintendents?" asked Blanche. "If we three have to appoint them all, it will mean a good deal of rather delicate work for us."

"We shall only appoint the first lot of officials, and we shall have the help of the Selection Committee. Afterwards appointments will be made from below. In the Post Office Department, for example, the letter carriers will elect their immediate superiors, these, we will say, the postmasters, and these in their turn the Postmaster-General. Of course we shall not want a big post office staff, but that is the principle of the thing."

"I know that has been advocated by some of the leaders," said Walter, "but,—do you think it is likely to be a very satisfactory arrangement?"

"It seems to me to be the only arrangement consistent with complete freedom of the people,—the only truly democratic arrangement."

"Well, yes, I suppose it is. Do you propose that the workers shall also have power to discharge their superintendents?"

"Yes, I think the faculties of appointing and discharging must go together."

"Very well," agreed Walter, "let us settle it as you suggest. Of course these arrangements will only be provisional, and subject to any modification that the people may

decide to effect through their Parliament. I say, Frank, I think your sister has gone to sleep. We ought not to have kept her at it so long. It is quite late. Are there any more headings?"

"No, I think we have settled the most important matters. I only have left Expenses of Government, Taxation, and Rent. They will be quite simply arranged."

"Yes, I suppose we can ascertain the expenses of Government, and send in a bill to each member quarterly, or something of that kind."

"Oh no, that is not the scheme. The land will all belong to the State of course, and the expenses of Government will be paid by the rent."

"I don't quite see that. The houses will be all alike, and therefore worth the same rent, say 10s. a week. According to your arrangement the State would pay each worker 30s., and the worker would pay the State back 10s. Wouldn't it be simpler to make the wages 20s. and the houses rent free?"

"Yes, now you mention it I think it would. But where are the expenses of Government to come from?"

"I don't see what expenses of Government there will be. All the Government officials will have the worker's wage like everybody else. They will draw their supplies from the common store, and if any materials have to be imported for Government use, payment will be made with goods from the same store. There could be no other expenses of Government. When you come to think of it, it would be foolish to ask the workers to pay rent or taxes to the State in aluminium checks. The State can make as many of these as it likes."

"Yes, so it would," agreed Frank, as he gently aroused his sleeping sister. "There will be no taxes to the mainland, because none of the members will have, at first at any rate, an income large enough to be taxed, so we can dispense with rent, taxation and Government expenses entirely. Now, good-night, both of you. I shall want to go through a list of trades with you to-morrow, so that we can settle which we can dispense with, and I can arrange for factories being built

for the others. Then on Monday we will cross: I will see my architect about the buildings, and arrange about the advertisements for Selection Committee and members. You, Walter, might call on all the leaders in the country and persuade them to join us. There will be no difficulty about that I feel sure."

CHAPTER III.

ICE CREAM.

THREE days after the conversation recorded in the last chapter, Walter Sinclair was ushered into the editorial sanctum of the great socialist organ, the *Millennium*.

Mr. Simkins, the editor of the paper, and one of the leading lights of British socialism, was a middle-aged gentleman of portly figure. He had a round good-natured face, whose expression made one feel that its possessor was pleased with himself and all the world. In short he was a man who appeared to find life worth living.

Mr. Simkins rose as Walter entered, and, extending him a friendly hand, bade him be seated.

"And what can I do for you, Mr. Sinclair?" said the great man, glancing at the card on the desk before him. "I understand that you are one of the organizers of this great Newæra scheme which has given us such a shock of delightful surprise. We are inserting a full-page advertisement in our next issue on Mr. Ledingham's instructions."

"Yes," said Walter, "I have been asked by my friend Ledingham to assist him in the starting of the Colony, and he and I both felt it our most pleasant duty to invite the co-operation and advice of the great leaders of the socialist movement. It is on this errand that I am here this morning."

"I am greatly flattered by your invitation," replied the editor, smiling benignantly, "and I shall be most happy to assist you to the utmost of my ability. In fact, I was engaged when you were announced, in the preparation of a leader in which I intend to comment in the most favourable manner on the far-seeing generosity of that great socialist, Sir Philip Ledingham."

Walter could scarcely suppress a smile at the description, but did not think it necessary to enter into explanations.

"Then I may tell my friend that we may count on your assistance, Mr. Simkins?"

"With the greatest pleasure, I am sure. You may count on the support of the *Millennium*, and I shall be happy to advise you personally on any difficult point of policy on which you may wish to consult me."

"Your support and advice will be most valuable, I am sure; but what I specially wished to ask was whether we might count on you as a member of the Colony?"

"A member? Well, that is rather a different matter and will have to be considered. I imagine there will be some sort of Council or Committee to manage the Colony?"

"The Committee of Management consists at present of Mr. Frank Ledingham, his sister, and myself; but there will be an election of Councillors three months after the inauguration of the Colony, and it is hoped that a number of the prominent leaders of the movement, such as yourself, will be elected."

"I see. Might I ask what other leaders will be taking part? You are not having that ass Bletheringham, for instance?"

"Mr. Bletheringham has promised to join us—or rather, I should say, he declined; but his wife informed me afterwards that he had thought better of his decision."

Mr. Simkins gave a sudden short laugh.

"His wife, eh? You may count on Bletheringham. And who else? Sansome of the *Thunderer*?"

"I have not yet seen Mr. Sansome, or any of the other leaders, but I hope to persuade them to join."

"Then let me give you a bit of advice. Keep clear of Sansome and his clan. They are utterly impracticable. As to Bletheringham, he is a fool, and will ruin any enterprise he is mixed up in."

"Oh, I have no doubt you will find these gentlemen very reasonable when you come to work with them in the furtherance of the cause. I may put your name down, Mr. Simkins?"

"Well, no, I am afraid I shall be obliged to decline. You see I have to consider my responsibility to my shareholders. I have made the *Millennium* a financial success, and they look to me to keep it going."

"Your shareholders? Do I understand then that the *Millennium* is a dividend-paying concern?"

"Yes, certainly. A great many of my readers hold shares."

"But surely your readers must be socialists? They cannot surely bring themselves to accept money for which they have done nothing at all?"

"Oh, yes, and only too glad to get it. Preference shareholders of course. I myself hold the ordinary shares."

"Really, you surprise me, Mr. Simkins. I feel sure I remember reading in your last issue that all profits and dividends are robbed from the workers, who are entitled to the whole of the produce of their labour. Excuse my request for enlightenment on this point. It has an important bearing on the policy we shall have to pursue in Newæra."

"Well, you see, a paper like this cannot be run without capital, and all the shareholders, including myself, are mainly interested in helping forward the cause."

"Exactly; I appreciate the motive for supplying the capital, but I understood that socialists were always willing to lend money without interest, and they should be doubly willing when it is to further the cause. 'Lend, hoping for nothing again,' is not that the rule?"

"Well, you see, we are living in a capitalist society, and we have to play the capitalist game. When we get socialism it will be different. One man can't make socialism."

"No doubt that is true; but I should have thought it extremely important to set a correct example. If socialists accept dividends how can they carry on a war against dividend hunters? As to the profits which presumably come to you as ordinary shareholder, it would surely be only just to share them equally with the writers, printers, and compositors, the workers in short who have produced them, and to whom they belong. I hope you will not think I am

interfering unduly in your private affairs. My friends and I will have to deal with a large amount of capital in connection with Newæra, and I naturally look to you for guidance on this important point."

Mr. Simkins rose and paced slowly from the door to the window and back again. Then he resumed his seat.

"My dear Mr. Sinclair, as you evidently take an interest in the affairs of the *Millennium*, I think it will be best to be frank with you. Might I trouble you to look out of that window?"

Walter was rather surprised at this request, but complied without hesitation.

"What do you see?" said Mr. Simkins.

"Nothing but a rather dismal street."

"Is there nobody in sight?"

"Only a man with a barrow, and a small boy."

"Ah, will you tell me what the man is doing?"

"He appears to be selling ice cream."

"Thank you. Now, Mr. Sinclair, I want to ask you a question. Do you suppose that man lives on ice cream?"

"Well, no: I think it very unlikely."

"And so do I, very unlikely. I imagine he finds that there are certain people who are glad to exchange pennies for ice cream. He likes pennies better than ice cream, so he makes the exchange. It does not do them any harm if they don't take too much. In short, he sells ice cream to other people, but he doesn't live on it himself. Do you take me?"

"But do you mean to suggest——?"

"Precisely. I am like our friend in the street. I sell socialism to certain persons who are glad to give me pennies for it. It does them no harm,—in moderation of course,—and the pennies do me a lot of good. I sell it,—but I don't live on it."

"But do you mean me to understand that you, the editor of a socialist newspaper, do not believe in socialism?"

"Believe in it? That's another matter. Ask our friend there if he doesn't believe in ice cream. Of course I believe

in it, but I don't take it,—internally as one may say. It doesn't agree with me."

"Well, I must say this appears to me a very strange attitude, but I can imagine that one holding your views would not be attracted by the idea of living in a socialist colony."

"That is certainly the case. I am sorry to have shocked your feelings Mr. Sinclair, but I feel sure you will come to see the reasonableness of our attitude very soon. I expect you have seen a good many references to the 'Zionist movement'? Yes? Well, did you never wonder why it is that the Jews are always threatening to go to Palestine,—nobody raises any objection, but they don't go. Shall I tell you the reason? If they got to Palestine, they would have to make their money out of Jews: it suits them a lot better to make it out of Gentiles. You see? It comes easier. Just the same principle applies in our case. To be a socialist in a capitalist community is all right, there is plenty to fire at. But to be a socialist in a socialist community, is——." Mr. Simkins ended with a gesture, very expressive, but quite indescribable.

"Well, I sincerely trust you do the socialist party an injustice, otherwise it is a poor lookout for Newæra. But I feel confident that the views you expressed are not the usual ones. I have never seen a sign of such an attitude among influential socialists."

"You have not? What about Australia? They have a socialist Government there. Have they brought in socialism? Not a bit of it. They believe in the nationalization of the land, like all good socialists, but if you want a square mile or so of land for your own exclusive property, you can have it free gratis for nothing from the Australian Government, and if they see you coming, they will go out to meet you, and press you to take it and call it your own. I have not heard of many socialists applying though. Undeveloped land is not much in our line. No doubt our turn will come later," and Mr. Simkins gave an expressive wink.

"Well, Mr. Simkins. I see it is useless to press you to

become a Newæran. I will thank you for your courtesy, and say good morning."

"Good morning, my dear Sir, and let me give you a parting piece of advice. Don't run your head into a noose. Take warning by what I have said, and above all keep clear of the Sansome lot."

Letter from Walter Sinclair to Frank Ledingham.

Dear Frank,—I have called on all the leaders whose names you gave me, and I must say the result is disappointing. Mr. Alexander Bletheringham was the first I saw. He was rather scornful at the idea of an experiment which, he said, could not possibly succeed, and he declined to have anything to do with it. When I had left, Mrs. Bletheringham came running after me, and said she and the children would be delighted to join, and that Mr. B. had decided to come too. There seems to be some joke about Mrs. B., but I can't tell what it is. She does not strike me as a comic person at all.

I then saw Mr. Simkins, who said he could not possibly join because of his engagements to his shareholders. I don't think we shall lose much by his absence. He warned me to have nothing to do with Sansome or Bletheringham. Nevertheless I went to see Sansome at the *Thunderer* office. He was very emphatic that we should keep clear of Simkins and the "Fabian crew." He will not join himself because he feels he can serve the cause better in his present sphere of action. He also objects to living in the country. Says he "likes a bit of life." I afterwards saw Marshall and Hill, and Sanderson, but the result was the same in each case. They all offered to give any amount of advice, and Sanderson said he would come if he might run the show on his own lines. Evidently we shall have to get on as best we can without the leaders. I will be at the office on Thursday as arranged. There should be some applications in by then,

Yours as ever,

WALTER.

CHAPTER IV.

THE APPLICANTS.

FRANK and Walter were seated at opposite sides of the table in the office which had been hastily taken in the city. The office bore signs that the time had been well occupied since the outlines of the Newæra scheme were settled. Pinned on the walls were plans and elevations of "model dwellings" extracted from various architectural journals. A set of shelves was crammed with Blue-books, almanacs, census returns, and standard works on socialism, everything that seemed likely to contain information or suggestions bearing on the formation of a colony of socialists. On the table between the two friends was a large pile of unopened letters. A similar pile was on another table by the door, and a veritable stack of letters was seen in one corner of the office on the floor.

"Well," said Walter, "several of the eminent gentlemen I have been calling on prophesied that we should get nobody to come to Newæra. I wish they could see this office."

"We must not let ourselves be discouraged by people who evidently want an excuse for standing out of the scheme," said Frank, as he took a handful of letters, and proceeded to rip them open and glance at the contents. "What have we here? Emily Warburton, typist, would like to become a member if wages are as stated. Alice Green, milliner ditto. Annie Swain—good paper this—thinks it would be lovely to be a socialist and earn men's wages. Ethel Green, machinist, always believed socialism would come: four pages of her views on socialism. (Mrs.) J. Hodgson writes for husband, who has a cold—nine children—feels sure the place will suit. Susie Crampton,— I say, Walter, they are all women!

What does it mean? Ah, here is a man, an old one by the writing—been out of work for years, would like particulars of employment. Mary Ann Smith, Susan Billingham—I am afraid this is not a very hopeful lot.”

“No, and this is not either. What did you put in the advertisement?”

“I gave very brief particulars of the scheme, applications for membership invited—equal payment for men and women—starting at 30s., and probably increased later on. Perhaps it was a mistake to mention wages—too much like an appeal to cupidity. Hullo, here is one at last, two in fact. Joe Deacon, decent chap that he is, and his son Sam. They are the right sort at any rate. Joe is one of the best foremen at the Vulcan, a sound socialist and a thorough engineer. He helped me with my experiments at the works: just like him to apply as an ordinary member, and he offers to put his savings into the scheme.”

“He is evidently one of the sort we want, and there must be plenty more like him. The question is how to get at them. I think we shall have to organize meetings all over the country, and explain what the scheme really is.”

“Yes,” said Frank, putting another handful of letters from lady applicants on the growing pile. “I expected we should have to hold some meetings, but in the meantime we must alter that advertisement. I see, there is a sprinkling of applications from men, and one or two of them might be suitable, but most of those I have opened so far seem to be from people whose idea is to get something out of socialism, not to do something for it. We don’t want people who take that attitude.”

“I think it is a very common one, and not confined to socialists.”

“Not by any means, and it is likely to be common, so long as the cry of every politician is, ‘We will give you this at someone else’s expense.’ If they would appeal to higher motives than that of greed, if they would say, ‘we ask you to make this sacrifice for the good of your country,’ they would meet with quite as hearty a response, and would do more credit to themselves and their cause.”

"I agree with all that, but I don't see how we are to apply it. What sacrifice should we ask them to make?"

"Well, I think we might do worse than take a suggestion from Joe Deacon's spontaneous offer of his savings. Suppose we ask each member to contribute, say, £20 towards the expenses of the Colony."

"You mean as a loan, bearing interest?"

"No, certainly not. Socialists have nothing to do with interest. I mean a simple contribution towards expenses. It will serve as a guarantee of good faith. A man who has put by some money, and is willing to make a sacrifice for the good of the cause, is pretty sure to be the sort we are looking for."

"I think £10 would be more reasonable than £20, and even that would keep out a lot of people who might be useful members. For instance, we shall want some single women to make our community complete, and £10 is a good deal for a working woman to find."

"I don't think so. You must remember that we are going to pay the women as much as the men. A woman who puts down £10, and gets a situation for two years at 30s. a week, is not making a very great sacrifice. We shall probably find more than we have room for."

"Possibly, but we shall not be giving assistance to those who need it most."

"Of course not, but we are not starting a relief works. My father's idea was to get together the pick of the socialists of the country; people who are, every one of them, useful and successful members of the present society. If they prove to be not less useful and successful under socialism, then we shall have proved that a socialist society is a possibility, which he and others have denied."

"Yes, I think that is reasonable. Suppose then we make a rule that each adult member, that is each head of a family, and each single man and woman who joins independently, is to contribute at least £10 to the Colony, as a guarantee of good faith."

At this point a clerk entered from the outer office. "There

is a man here named James Walsh, who would like to see someone about membership."

"Is he the first to apply personally?"

"Oh, no, sir. We had a crowd here when I opened the office. They seemed to think it was a relief works. I told them work would not be commenced for about a year, and they said it was a 'frost,' and went away."

"Well, show Mr. Walsh in, please."

Mr. Walsh was ushered in, cap in hand, a typical, sturdy English working-man in his working clothes—a man who looked like business.

"Please sit down, Mr. Walsh," said Frank. "I understand you wish to become a member of Newæra?"

"Well, yes, sir, if the conditions are suitable, and if I am considered suitable. I saw your notice in the paper, and I just thought I would look in and inquire."

"Quite right. You are a socialist, I presume?"

"Yes, sir."

"Have you any reference with you?"

Mr. Walsh handed a letter to Frank.

"This seems all right. Are you working at present?"

"No, sir. I'm out of a job at present, but I'm hoping to get one on Monday."

"Very good. I hope you will be successful. Now you will want to know the conditions of membership. Some particulars are given in the advertisement, but there is one condition that was not mentioned. It has been decided that each member must make a contribution of £10 as a sort of guarantee of good faith. The money will go towards the expenses of the colony, which are, of course, very heavy."

Mr. Walsh considered for a minute. "Ten pounds is a big sum for a man like me, sir. I don't say I mightn't be able to raise it, but what I wanted to know about was the wages. I think 30s. was mentioned."

"Yes, we think of starting at 30s., with something additional for a wife and for each child. Are you a married man, Mr. Walsh?"

"No, sir. You see, sir, what I look at is this. I am a

joiner by trade, and a clubman, and my club won't let me work for less than club wages, which is 38s."

"I understand your position, but I don't think your club need stand in your way. At present your employer pays you 38s. for a week's work, charges £4 or £5 for it, and puts the difference in his pocket. In Newæra the whole product of your labour will belong to yourself—that is, the whole product of the labour of the colony will be divided among the workers, so you will certainly be better off than you are at present."

"Well, that may be as you say; but I don't see where that 30s. comes in. My club won't let me work for that. Couldn't you make it £4 or £5 like you say?"

"You see, Mr. Walsh, we want to be on the safe side at the beginning. It is likely that labour will not be fully productive just at first, before we have got into the swing, but at the end of the first year, or perhaps sooner, an estimate will be made of the value of goods produced, and this value will be the basis of the new rate of wages. As production increases, the shares of all the workers will increase."

"Well, I can't say but what that's fair, only my club won't let me take less than club wages, not for a week; if I do, I lose my membership, and then I shall get no benefit—me that has been paying in regular these ten years. You see, sir, this Newæra may not go on for more than two years, and maybe not so long, and then where shall I be without a job, and no out-of-work benefit?"

"Very well, Mr. Walsh, I will consider your point. If you will kindly fill in this form, which does not bind you in any way, I will place your application before the Committee, and communicate with you later."

Mr. Walsh filled in the application form, and took his leave.

"That seems one of the right sort," said Frank, placing the form on a file. "I think this matter of union wages will be a difficulty, though, unless we start at a higher figure, and even if we put the wages at, say, £2, which would cover most of the union rates, we shall still be underpaying professional men, and we must have some—doctors, for instance—if our State is to be a representative one."

"As for that," replied Walter, "there must be plenty of doctors who are not earning £2 a week, and in any case we must assume that socialists believe in socialism, and if they believe in it they will be willing to stake something on it and make some sacrifice. After all, the arrangement we make now is only temporary, and if the community decides that doctors should be paid more than joiners, it will be done. The will of the people is supreme."

"Very well, then. Let us put the wages at £2, and keep clear of the trade union difficulty. Of course, we shall have this point to consider. The £2 we give a man in our aluminium currency will be merely an order on the State stores for a certain quantity of food, clothing, etc., and the quantity he can get in exchange for his £2 will depend on the prices we fix. How do you think we should fix the prices of all the various articles?"

"I think the simplest plan will be to take the English market prices of all articles as they stand when the colony is started, and let these be the permanent prices in Newæra. We can't be always altering prices according to demand and supply. When the time comes for raising wages all round, it can be done by paying more money, or by lowering all prices, whichever seems more convenient; the result will be the same in either case. I think there is one point we have overlooked, though. Shall we pay young persons at the same rates as experienced workers?"

Frank took a minute for consideration. "Yes, I think so," he said. "Apart from wife and family, for which we are making special provision, the expenses of each individual will be about the same; indeed, the young man is likely to eat more food and wear out more clothes than the old one. I think the worker will accept the arrangement as a fair one, whatever his age. He will be habituated to regard his wages, not as a *quid pro quo*, but as the provision made by society to enable him to carry out his labour. In practice I expect this question of wages will give very little difficulty, because everyone will have as much as he can possibly want to spend."

CHAPTER V.

THE ELECTION.

THE year of preparation was a busy time for all the members of the Selection and Management Committees. Frank Ledingham devoted himself to superintending the preparation of the Island of Newæra for its future population, and his sister gave invaluable assistance, chiefly in the way of suggestions for the comfort and convenience of the houses and public buildings. A town of corrugated iron houses first made its appearance, and served for the accommodation of the workmen engaged in the building operations. It was found possible to utilize only a few of the buildings of the original village of St. Michael's, the inhabitants of which had been bought out on very generous terms. It was therefore necessary to provide practically the whole of the buildings and equipment for a self-supporting and self-governing community of 10,000 souls. The new town of Newæra was erected on the site of the old village, and comprised a Government building or town hall, with council chamber, numerous offices, and mint; a public hall for meetings and entertainments, with library and recreation rooms attached; three churches; a public eating-house; a school; three large works, in each of which a number of different trades were to be carried on, and ten smaller workshops for separate trades (all workshops equipped with modern machinery for producing almost everything the community would require); five large stores or shops, for the distribution of the articles produced; a general warehouse for storage purposes, and 2,500 houses of different designs, but all having about the same accommodation. Several existing farmhouses were available, and more were provided, together with houses for farm labourers. Almost the whole

of the undeveloped land in the island was at once put under cultivation, so as to be ready, when the time came, to produce all the food for the colonists, and the coal mine was got into working order. All the work was of a plain, substantial character, though architectural effects were by no means neglected. The operations were carried out by contractors, working under Frank's instructions and supervision.

Meanwhile Walter Sinclair was busy on the mainland, beating up and examining recruits, with the assistance of the Selection Committee. The scheme was extensively advertised, and public meetings were held in the principal centres. The scheme was favoured with plenty of comment and advice, and not a little ridicule by the general Press. The socialist organs were especially free with their advice, but by no means unanimous; indeed, a bitter controversy was waged between the *Millennium* and the *Thunderer* on the question of wages, education, and the appointment of officials. The view of the *Thunderer* was, that any community which admitted the mammon of unrighteousness, in the form of money and wages payments, was doomed to failure; but very warm approval was given to the system of appointment and discharge of officials by those under their authority. The *Millennium*, on the other hand, considered that any community which adopted such a system of appointments was doomed to failure, but strongly approved of the system of equal money payments. Simultaneously with this exchange of thunderbolts there were minor skirmishes proceeding in all parts of the field. Bletheringham and his school were strong in condemnation of the system of prices based on those obtaining on the mainland. They considered it essential to success that the price of each article should be based on the time required to produce it; while the Sanderson school was opposed to the introduction of money, wages, officials, Parliament, and the factory system, any one of which was considered sufficient to doom the scheme to failure. In short, it became evident that, in the event of failure, every leading socialist in the country

would be able truthfully to say that he had predicted the result, though it seemed probable that no two leaders would attribute failure to the same cause.

Among the general public the scheme was discussed with lively interest. There were some who regarded it as an injudicious advertisement of a noxious cult ; but as the details of the scheme became known, there was a growing tendency to regard it as a crucial experiment, by which socialism was to stand or fall, and both socialists and anti-socialists showed equal confidence in predicting the result which each desired.

Among a certain class of the population, a good deal of bitterness was caused by the £10 entrance fee, and the vigorous inquiries of the Selection Committee ; indeed, there was something approaching a riot in one North Country town on the occasion of one of the public meetings. A demonstration was organized among the unemployed, and there was an unsuccessful attempt to break up the meeting and mob the speakers.

The three friends who had undertaken the initial responsibility of the colony were very little influenced by these various demonstrations, though they congratulated themselves on having avoided the danger of divided counsels on the Committee of Management. Their sole aim was to establish the colony on sound, practical lines. They recognized that mistakes would certainly be made, but were content to trust to the good sense of the whole people of the colony to rectify any blunders into which they might unwittingly fall.

As the great day of inauguration approached the prospects of the colony looked increasingly hopeful. The preparations on the island were very far advanced. Applications for membership were received in ample numbers, and more than 10,000 men, women and children had been accepted by the Selection Committee, and nominated for membership. They were drawn from all classes, and comprised parsons, doctors, clerks, artizans, and labourers, with a fair proportion of women workers. One month before the inauguration day

the final election of members took place. A full list of nominated persons was printed and distributed among the candidates themselves. Each candidate was required to return his list to the central office, after having crossed off the names of any candidates whom he might consider undesirable. The result of the election caused some amusement. The names of the twenty-seven socialist parsons who had been nominated were crossed off more than 2,000 of the papers. All the other candidates were elected.

Part III
REALIZATION

CHAPTER I.

THE FÊTE.

INAUGURATION day had arrived. For a fortnight past, Newærans, singly and in family parties, had been converging from all parts of the kingdom to the port of embarkation, whence they were conveyed in specially chartered steamers to the shores of their promised land. Each steamer-load of emigrants was welcomed on arrival by the three friends who had made themselves responsible for the comfort and well-being of the colonists, and the newcomers were personally conducted to the houses that had been allotted to them.

In every home a welcome had been prepared. Blanche Ledingham had made this her especial care. Every house was surrounded by a garden gay with flowers. Each had a well-stocked kitchen garden behind. In the living-room was a meal ready laid, and in the centre of the table a great bowl of flowers. The rooms were furnished with simple, artistic taste, and fitted with every appliance that could add to the comfort and convenience of the home—everywhere were those little touches which only a woman can impart. In this work, Blanche had been assisted by an army of willing helpers. Over a thousand of the women and girls had been landed in advance, and had busied themselves under her supervision in giving the final touches to the homes of those who were to follow. It was now nearly a week since the last batch of colonists had arrived, with such of their personal property as they cared to bring with them, and they had spent the intervening days in unpacking, arranging, and settling in their new quarters.

Inauguration day dawned bright and clear. The village was awakened early by the pealing of bells from the three churches (not for service, though it was Sunday), and a band

of young men and women was soon parading the village street, with voices joined in songs from the "Socialist Song Book." Very soon the whole village was astir, and the street was thronged with happy colonists in holiday dress, laughing, singing, and exchanging greetings and congratulations on the dawn of a new era of peaceful co-operation.

The morning was devoted to an exchange of visits, and to viewing the public buildings, now thrown open for the first time. First, there was the town hall, with the Parliament room, in which the chosen representatives of the people were to meet and discuss the best means for giving effect to the people's will—the long suite of offices in which the business of the colony was to be transacted; the mint, with its engine and coining press, and its boxes of shining aluminium tokens—shillings, half-crowns, and sovereigns—which were to be paid to all in fair proportion, and were to be exchanged for the articles the colonists would themselves make for their own consumption and not for the profit of the greedy taskmaster.

Then there was the spacious public hall, with its polished floor, its platform and galleries. On either side were reading-rooms, billiard-rooms, playing-rooms for children, a library with well-filled shelves, and a large room for social intercourse, with a plentiful supply of easy chairs, and little tables for quiet games—chess, cards, dominoes, and so forth.

There was the printing house, where the *Newæra Record* was to be produced, and the works of the Newæra poets and authors published. The school, the churches (for which some secular use would have to be found), the factories, where work had been begun by bands of workmen brought from the mainland and left in readiness for the colonists to take up—all had to be inspected and admired, for all were the common property of the people themselves, to be used by themselves, for their own pleasure and convenience, to satisfy their own wants.

At midday the town hall bell was heard, and the people gathered on the village green and seated themselves in groups under the trees. Volunteers were called to the eating-house close by, and soon a stream of willing helpers

was seen to issue with trays of smoking viands, to be partaken of, picnic fashion, on the grass, while those of the older folks who preferred to have their meal within doors were seated in the large hall of the public eating-house.

As Blanche and Walter and Frank threaded their way among the various groups on the green, greeting newly-made acquaintances and stopping now and again to give a word of welcome to some veteran of the cause or to discuss some point of Newæran policy, their hearts were gladdened by the charming scene around them—the sunlit green, dappled with shade from the fine old elms that had been the pride of St. Michael's village, lighted up by the bright dresses of the women and children, and by the happy faces on every side. Music was not wanting to add gaiety to the picnic, for a band of musicians had been got together, and was playing a lively air on the verandah of the eating-house: and now all talk was hushed, as the clear voice of a factory lass rang out in a stirring song of the North Country.

Dinner being over, there was a shifting of the groups—on one side a party of youths and maidens were playing rounders among the trees; here two good-natured giants, Walter Grimshaw, a mechanic from the Vulcan Works, and Sam Wallis, the master baker, formed the centre of a group, whose frequent bursts of laughter greeted each fresh sally of wit and repartee. Merry children were everywhere; under a giant elm, Joe Deacon and a dozen or so of the elder men were earnestly discussing knotty points of socialist policy. Not far away Mr. Bletheringham, the socialist orator, stood with hand uplifted in the midst of a ring of seated listeners, holding forth on the new era that had dawned that day. "My friends," he was saying as the three passed by—"My friends, you ask me what is socialism? Well may you ask. I bid you go to the machine workers of our great northern towns, who are chained for eleven hours a day to a monotonous toil, with the eye of the overseer and the fear of dismissal spurring them on to an exertion which leaves them at the end of the day physical wrecks, with no ambition but to restore their wasted energies at the nearest public-house.

I bid you go to the pottery and chemical workers, whose systems are poisoned, whose sight is destroyed. Go to the sweater's victims, living, eating, working, dying in one room, for which a vampire landlord will take in rent one half of all the family can earn by working day and night. You ask me what is socialism? Go to the——" Mr. Bletheringham was seen to stagger and suddenly subside on the grass. Several of his hearers started to their feet in alarm for his safety, but soon their fears were allayed. His faithful spouse, seated behind him with her nine young hopefuls, had exercised a gentle persuasion on his coat tails, and he had lost his balance. His oration was cut short, but his question was answered. Socialism had come. It was here around him.

So passed the afternoon, and gradually the groups melted, and the happy colonists took their way homeward to the evening meal. But the great day was not yet ended. Again the town hall bell rang forth, and the people flocked to the public hall, where a social gathering was to be held, and Frank Ledingham, the chief servant of the little commonwealth, was to give an account of his stewardship, to explain the policy of the State, and to answer questions. The business being over, refreshments were handed round, and the company was entertained with song and recitation. Meanwhile, in one of the churches near by the chairs had been pushed aside, and the floor cleared for a dance. Here the younger people were assembled, with Blanche to give introductions and set them at their ease; but this indeed was scarcely necessary: it was difficult to realize that most of the assembled guests were strangers only a week ago.

The morrow was to be the first day of regular work, and the festivities were not carried far into the night. The town hall bell was sounded once more, and the tired and happy Newærans escorted each other home under the stars.

CHAPTER II.

WORK AND WAGES.

"SORRY I have nothing better to offer you," said Blanche, as she handed round a tray containing a large plate of biscuits and some glasses of water. "I was helping Miss Perkins, the laundry superintendent, all the morning, and when I went out to do my shopping this afternoon, I found all the stores were closed."

It was the Saturday evening following on the Sunday inauguration day. The three friends were assembled in the cosy living-room of No. 27, Liberty Street, the cottage which they shared with Joe Deacon and his son Sam. Newæra had done a week's work, and it had been a busy week for the Management Committee. It had been arranged that Frank should act as General Superintendent of Production, and Walter as General Superintendent of Distribution. Blanche had not assumed any official title, but she had found ample employment in visiting the school, the laundry, the weaving shed—all the places where women's work was carried on, and where her advice and assistance might be required by the women whom she had appointed to take charge.

"Doesn't it seem rather an awkward arrangement to have the stores closed on Saturday afternoon and evening?" said Walter, eyeing the biscuits doubtfully. "Is it to be a regular arrangement?"

"I don't think it is a very good one," replied Frank. "I met Simkins, of store No. 1 just now, and asked him about it. He said he supposed he was to work the same hours as all the rest—8 to 12 and 1 to 5; Saturdays 8 to 12 and—anyway, he and his assistants had to go to the town hall at 12 for their wages, so they shut up the store. I know some of them had to wait till nearly 2 o'clock before they were paid, so I could not grumble."

"Do you think we should let the arrangement stand, then?"

"No. I said he must fetch all his people's wages himself, or send someone for them, and arrange for the store to be open Saturday afternoon and evening. It is the only time many of the workers have for shopping."

"He had no objection?"

"Well, he asked if he was to be paid extra for working longer hours than the rest. Of course I couldn't agree to that, so I told him to open at 9 instead of 8 each morning. He consented to try it, though, as he said quite truly, it is not quite the same thing as Saturday afternoon, and he thought some of the assistants might be a little upset about it. You were at the town hall at paying time, weren't you? How did it go off?"

"Oh, fairly well, I think. We were short-handed at the town hall, and it took much too long. The work has been behind all the week, and I shall have to take a few men from the printing office, and perhaps a few girls from the weaving shed and dressmaking to help. We have only 120 workers at the town hall, and I propose to instal ten more on Monday."

"How did they like the new coinage?"

"I think it was rather admired. Some of the workers seemed in rather a hurry to get to the stores to see whether an aluminium shilling would work as well as a silver one. That reminds me," Walter went on with a laugh; "there was one exception. Simple Ab wouldn't have anything to do with aluminium money."

"Who is Simple Ab?" asked Blanche.

"Oh, haven't you heard? Why, Bletheringham. He has got himself nicknamed 'Simple Ab' by his habit of talking about 'Simple Abstract Necessary Social Human Labour,' on every possible occasion. They say he never gets beyond 'Simple Ab' now before something is thrown at him. Anyway, he would not have his wages in aluminium: he said he had looked in at the mint, and seen one man making aluminium sovereigns 100 a minute, and there was not enough

simple abstract necessary social human labour expended to make them worth a sovereign, so he insisted on being paid in gold and silver."

"But I suppose they had not any to give him?"

"No, of course not, but I happened to have some of the old money in my office, so I gave him his wages in gold and silver, and he went off chuckling."

"Do you know what the week's wages come to?"

"Yes," said Walter, taking a slip of paper from his pocket. "I asked the head cashier, and made a note of the figures. Here they are:—

	£	s.	d.
1,543 married men at £2 - - -	3,086	0	0
1,530 wives at 10s. - - -	765	0	0
3,057 children under 16 at 5s. - -	764	5	0
1,983 single women workers at £2 -	3,966	0	0
1,930 single men at £2 - - -	3,860	0	0
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
10,043	£12,441	5	0

We shall have to raise our £12,000 a week to pay wages with."

"What an awful lot of money!" said Blanche, as she cleared away the remains of the frugal meal. "Do you think the mint will be able to keep up with it?"

"It is not a question of the mint," said Frank, with a smile. "Most of the money will be paid in every week at the stores in exchange for food and clothing and other things, and of course it will be paid out again on the Saturday, and so on, over and over again."

"That is so," said Walter, "but the question does arise whether the colony will be able to produce £12,000 worth of goods every week, so that the things will be there for the people to buy. What do you think about that?"

"I see no reason to expect that supplies will run short. Of course we are consuming wheat, and not producing any at present, but the harvest will be ready in two months or so. In the meantime we have a fair stock of corn—not

quite enough to last us till our own comes in, perhaps; but we have a balance at the bank in London, and of course we shall have to look to our export trade to supply deficiencies."

"Yes, no doubt we shall be able to manufacture far more than we can consume. Do you happen to know what the cash balance is?"

"Yes, it amounts to just about what we received in entrance fees—something over £40,000. All that remained of my father's bequest was laid out in stores. Well, Joe, how are things in the village?"

Joe Deacon and his son came in laden with parcels, which they deposited on the table.

"Everything is going on very nicely," said Joe, throwing himself into a chair. "Sam and I have been round to the reading-room. When we came out I noticed the stores were open, so I did a bit of shopping for Miss Blanche."

"Thank you, Joe, that is a great help," said Blanche, inspecting the purchases. "But you have forgotten the sugar, and there are one or two things I want for the house. I will just run out and get them. How is it the stores have opened again?"

"Well, from what I can hear there was a bit of a row about it. The farm folks and miners had their wages sent out to them, and they came trooping in this afternoon to do their shopping for the week-end. Some of them were hungry, and they were a bit upset to find the restaurant and all the stores closed. They routed out some of the assistants, and made them take down their shutters. There was a bit of grumbling about working overtime."

Blanche left the room to put on her things, and Joe turned to Frank.

"Talking of overtime, Mr. Frank, I think your sister is overdoing it. She is working as hard as any of us all day, all over the village, and when she comes home there is a lot to be done in the house. Of course we four men do what we can to help, but men are not much good at these things. Don't you think we could get someone to help her?"

As Blanche came in with her basket on her arm, Frank put the case to her.

"Joe has been suggesting that you should have some help in the house, Blanche. He is afraid you are doing too much overtime. What do you say?"

Blanche stood with her basket resting on the table, and her cloak thrown back. The hard work and responsibility of the past year had left their mark upon her. She was more womanly, and not less charming, but, looking at her critically, Frank saw with some concern that there were signs of undue strain about her eyes, and he inwardly reproached himself for having allowed her in her enthusiasm to overtax her strength. "Yes," she said, "I have thought of that myself; not that I should not be very glad to go on as we are at present, but I am afraid I can't make you as comfortable as I should like unless I have some help. But I don't know how to go about getting any. You see, all the married women have their own houses to look after. I could easily get a girl, but—should I offer her wages? They are all getting £2 a week, and I could not offer her less."

"You certainly must not make any such arrangement," said Frank decidedly. "We must not begin introducing wage-slavery. She will be doing useful work, and the State will have to pay her, just as before."

"Yes, I thought you would say that; in fact, I spoke to a girl, who would be very glad to come, as she does not care for the factory work; but she naturally thinks of the £2 a week she is earning, and she says she can only get it if the superintendent gives her a signed wage certificate to take to the town hall. If she came here we could not pay her wages as you say, and who would give her her certificate?"

"Why, you would, of course. She would be working under your instructions, and you would be her superintendent."

"Oh, well, that's all right if I can do it. You might get me some of the certificate forms from the town hall. I suppose in that case anybody can give a wage certificate?"

Frank hesitated a little. "Well, yes," he said at last, "I

suppose it does practically come to that. Of course we are all equal, and what applies to you would apply equally to anyone else who wanted help—a nurse, for instance, or a gardener,”

“I say, Frank,” put in Walter, “we must be a little careful. If anyone can give a wage certificate to anyone else, we may as well dispense with them altogether. We have got as decent a lot of people as one could possibly get together, but still—we are all human.”

“Yes, I see that point,” said Frank, and he considered a minute. “I think I see how to manage it. I will appoint a Superintendent of Private Employment. I have the very man in my eye. He is superintending the paper mill, doing splendid work. I will establish him at the town hall, and anyone who wants help of this kind will apply to him for a licence to give wage certificates. He will want, say, half a dozen inspectors under him to see that genuine work is being done for the wages. You can spare six of your men for inspectors, Joe?”

“Well, Mr. Frank, the export department are pressing us to get on with a set of pumps for shipment, but I suppose I shall have to spare some men if they are wanted at the town hall.”

The matter of domestic help being settled, Blanche took her departure, and Walter volunteered to accompany her, to carry her parcels.

When they had gone, the three men lighted their pipes, and Sam buried himself in the first number of the *Newæra Record*.

“There is one thing I wanted to consult you about, Mr. Frank,” said Joe, leaning forward in his easy chair. “We had a little trouble at the workshop the other day, and I am not sure if I acted right. You know Grimshaw, from the Vulcan Works?”

“Yes, I think so; a powerful man with reddish hair, isn’t he?”

“Yes, that’s the man. Well, he was under me at the Vulcan, and I always got on pretty well with him, though he

was sometimes a bit difficult to manage. He is a clever workman, and a great favourite with the men. Well, on Thursday I told him to fix a bracket of a press we are building for the printing works, and he fixed it all wrong. I told him to fix it again, and he refused—said it was right enough, and was a bit saucy. I don't think now that he meant it badly, but I am a bit hasty, and I am used to having the work done as I want it. Anyway, I told him he could do as I said or get out of it. He was huffy, and said he would have his wages note. I gave it him, and he walked out of the place."

"I think you were quite right," said Frank. "You are responsible for the work, and of course you must insist on your orders being obeyed."

"That's just how I looked at it, Mr. Frank; but that was not the last of Grimshaw. Ten minutes after, he came round to the front door, asking for a job. In fact he said he had a right to work, and demanded to be taken on. Of course I couldn't deny his right to work, so I let him come in—rather I should say he came in without asking for permission. I fixed the bracket myself so as not to have another tussle with him."

"It was certainly a difficult position," said Frank meditatively. "I can see a good deal of tact will be required, but you have so much experience of dealing with men, that I have no doubt you will get on the right side of them."

"I will do my best," said Joe dubiously, "but I can't see my way very clear. You see, some of the youngsters thought it a very good joke, and all yesterday they were trying to get me to sack them, so that they could do like Grimshaw."

"I am glad you mentioned it," said Frank; "I will think it over. Ah, here come these two, with groceries enough to provision a fort. You found the stores open, then?"

"Yes," said Blanche, taking off her hat, and tidying her hair before the glass of a picture, "the stores were open, and we have had such fun. When we got to No. 1, we found

Mr. Simkins and Simple Ab having an altercation, with a crowd of people round them. Simple Ab had gone to buy two loaves of bread, and offered a golden sovereign in payment. Mr. Simkins declined to change it as it was not Newæra money. He offered to give him five Newæra shillings for it, as a speculation on his own account, but refused to take it in payment for goods. Simple Ab was furious. He said the value was fixed by the amount of Simple Abstract Necessary Social Human Labour that had been expended in mining the gold and making it into a sovereign, and he was going to have that value for it."

"And no doubt Mr. Simkins was convinced?" said Frank laughing.

"No, he wasn't. He said he always supposed the value of a thing depended on whether people valued it or not, and he didn't value money that wouldn't buy anything, no matter how much blank, blank, blank, blank labour it had got in it."

"So poor old Alexander had to go to bed supperless?"

"Oh, no, indeed. They were still at it when a sort of a whirlwind in petticoats came into the store, spun poor Alexander round as if he had been a dead leaf, seized the loaves, and vanished down the street, with Alexander Ab trotting at her heels."

There was a general laugh at poor Simple Ab's expense. Soon afterwards the company retired to bed, but before they left, Frank called Joe Deacon aside. "I will be round at your shop on Monday morning, Joe, and give Grimshaw a little straight talk. We can't have the whole colony ruined by such folly as that."

"I am sure I shall be glad if you will come round, Mr. Frank; but I would like to warn you he is a queer one to deal with. I said something about speaking to you, and he said he didn't care *that* for you. He would show Frank Ledingham that socialism means equality. I thought it best to mention it, so you would be prepared."

"Thank you, Joe; I will see what I can do with him."

CHAPTER III.

ARISTOCRACY OF LABOUR.

"WILL you come round to the town hall with me this afternoon?" said Walter Sinclair, pushing his chair back from the dinner table. "There are one or two things I should like to discuss with you."

Frank readily agreed, and the two set off. They stopped in the garden to gather a buttonhole each. It was evident that Blanche had found time to give the flowers some attention.

As the two friends walked down the village street, they heard a chorus of girls' voices in the distance. Turning a corner, they came in view of a charming picture on the village green. A group of about a hundred women and girls were seated on the grass, where it was shaded by one of the giant trees. They were engaged in fancy work or knitting, and were singing the chorus of a well-known song. In the background a number of men were playing cricket, and others lay on the grass, watching and applauding the game.

"A holiday?" said Frank in a puzzled voice. "I wonder what is the meaning of this!"

"I think I see Miss Blanche among them," said Walter, and immediately Blanche was seen advancing towards them.

"Well, you seem to be having a very merry time out here," said her brother. "Work over for the day?"

"I am afraid you will think we are very idle," she said apologetically. "You see, these are the workers from the laundry. They could not get on with their work because there was no soap, and Miss Perkins asked me if they might come out here, as it was so fine. It was no good stopping indoors, when there was nothing to do there."

"No soap! I don't understand. Do you mean there is no soap in Newæra?"

"Not a little bit, I believe, except what the people have got in their houses. The soap works is shut up. There are the men playing cricket."

"Well, this is very interesting. Do you happen to know why the soap works is shut up?"

"I think they have run short of soda, or something they want. The town hall forgot to order it from the mainland."

Frank shrugged his shoulders, and the two men saluted and passed on.

"They are understaffed at the town hall," said Walter, as they took the short road leading from the green to the town hall. "I keep going round to the factories for more recruits, and the superintendents are grumbling at my taking their best men for town hall duty, but I can see we shall have to have more. It is not the first time this has happened. Only yesterday a lot of the carpenters were off because they hadn't any nails; the nail makers were stopped for wire, because the wire mill had been making tons of one size which was not wanted, so far as I could make out, and which was too small for nails."

"I know there has been a good deal of grumbling about bad management at the town hall," said Frank, as they entered Walter's private office. "I suppose these hitches are bound to occur until we get properly organized. We must have a staff of men whose sole business it is to see that each factory is supplied with all the materials it requires, and, by the way, I think we had better have an office for appointing officials. I have been spending all my time this last week examining various workers as to their qualifications for town hall work. What we want is an Appointment Committee of men and women. I will go round to the clothing department tomorrow, and see if I can find a few suitable people. However, that is by the way. What did you want to consult me about?"

"It was this," said Walter, producing an account book, and several sheets of paper. "I have been going round the

warehouse and stores, now that the first month is up, and roughly taking stock of some of the principal items. I find we have less than two weeks' supply of corn at the present rate of consumption. It will be at least a month, or perhaps two, before we can begin to use our own crop: we have spent more than half the balance we had in the bank at starting, and the stock of some absolutely necessary things is very low indeed. Here are the figures. I think it will be necessary to take some steps at once, or we shall be in difficulties before the harvest comes in. After that, no doubt, it will be all right."

"It is certainly a serious state of affairs," said Frank, after he had carefully gone through the calculations Walter had placed before him. "Still, we shall be having a good deal in the way of manufactured goods to send over the water, and that should go a long way towards buying us any food we need. Had you thought of any particular way of meeting the difficulty?"

"Well, yes, I have been thinking over several ways. You see, the difficulty arises from two causes. In the first place, the goods coming into the warehouse from the factories do not amount to very much—not nearly enough to supply the wants of the colony and pay for what we have to import. I have been hoping they would increase, but they seem rather to diminish in quantity. There have been a good many hitches and stoppages from one cause and another. In the second place, the consumption of almost everything is very high, and is increasing. The people have higher wages than many of them have been accustomed to, and they spend them freely. I am afraid there is a certain amount of waste; for instance, I saw some children pelting each other with flour the other day. Their mother rebuked them, certainly; but chiefly, I think, on account of the mess they were making. Flour is cheap enough."

"And you propose to raise the price?"

"I have thought of three ways of dealing with the situation. We might reduce the wages, or increase the prices, or limit the supply."

“A reduction of wages is always unpopular.”

“Yes, and so is a general rise in prices, which comes to exactly the same thing. Of course it was arranged that we should adjust the distribution of commodities on the basis of the production over a sufficiently long period; but in the meantime something must be done, and I think the best thing will be to limit the supply. Suppose the warehouse sends a limited amount of each article, such as flour, into the stores each day; we can then easily make the stock hold out, and still there will be enough for all, though not enough to waste.”

“Yes, I agree with you. To begin raising the prices would be simply introducing the bad old system of supply and demand, which we have definitely abolished.”

“Very well, I will see that it is done. I have worked out the quantities of a few of the principal articles that we can afford to distribute each day, and I will hand over the list to the warehouse superintendent.”

“Very good; I think that will put an end to our difficulties, unless you have something else?”

“No other difficulties, but I have a proposal. I think we are in danger of getting into a rut. We ought to make an effort to stimulate initiative, invention, and the higher branches of literature and art. We have plenty of talent amongst us, but it wants bringing out. Of course it is unnecessary and undesirable to hold forth the vulgar incentive of gain, so I propose that we fix on certain titles to be conferred on anyone who renders a special service to the State—makes a great invention, or writes a good book. What do you think of the idea?”

“Excellent! We might have a range of titles borrowed from the old aristocracy—Knights, Baronets, Earls, and so on. They would be better understood and appreciated than any that we could invent.”

“Yes, that was my idea. We shall have to appoint a committee to confer the titles. Poor old Deacon will have to part with some more of his men to go on the committee for judging inventions. The committee will authorize

the factory to carry out experiments, and all the work in connection with the inventions that they approve; and we have plenty of men of culture and artistic taste who can go on the committee for judging works of literature and art. We could call it the Honours Committee. I will instruct the Appointment Committee to look out some suitable members, both men and women."

"I am afraid they can't sit in the town hall: we are crowded out here as it is."

"No, I thought of that. We had better have one of the churches fitted up as offices: they are empty at present, and they could easily be partitioned off into quite a number of good offices."

"A very good idea. It will relieve the pressure at the town hall, and find employment for a number of men."

"Yes, but—do you know, Frank?—I have begun to look at employment in rather a different light since I came here. Take a man working in the bakery. He is producing bread, which either he or someone else will eat. Take that man and put him on one of our committees, or set him on Government work. He will eat just as much bread, but he will no longer produce any. There is one less worker, but the same number of mouths to be fed, so all will have to go a little short or else the productive workers that are left will have to work a little harder. I never saw it quite in that light in the old country, but I suppose the same principle applies there."

"I am sure I don't know. According to that, the fewer the officials the Government appoints, and the less public work it undertakes, the richer the people will be. It seems an extraordinary conclusion to arrive at. At any rate it is clearly true in Newæra, as you say, and I am always against sending workers to the town hall unless it is absolutely necessary."

It was now near closing time, so the two friends wrote out instructions for the Appointment Committee to get together an Honours Committee. They drew up a notice relating to the new honorary titles, to be posted outside the town hall,

and made arrangements for the conversion of No. 1 church into offices. This work completed, they set out for home.

On their way they earnestly discussed the prospects of the new aristocracy of labour, and they were just approaching the village green when both simultaneously uttered a cry of surprise, and stopped dead. Both had been sprinkled from head to foot with what appeared to be dirty water. They looked round, but there was nobody in sight. After hastily wiping their faces and clothes, they walked up to a clump of elder bushes that grew beside the path, and which seemed to be the only place where their assailant could be finding cover. As they approached the bushes, they heard the sound of running footsteps, and perceived two small boys scampering across the field. Both gave chase, and soon succeeded in capturing one of the fugitives, a grimy urchin, grasping in one hand a garden syringe. Walter took a firm grip of his coat collar, and they returned to the road, with their captive between them.

"Now, you young rascal," said Frank, "what do you mean by that? Do you know who I am?"

"Old Leather Hams," said the boy insolently.

"That is not my name, but I think I know your name, and if you have no objection, we will call on your father together. How is it you are not in school?"

"Don't go to school."

"Oh, don't you? then I think it is a pity. I suppose your mother didn't teach you that nasty trick?"

"I learnt it myself," said the boy, with a grin.

"And what does your mother teach you then?"

"Teaches me with a strap if I come in her way, but I don't."

"I suppose you go home sometimes—at mealtimes for instance?"

"I go to the eating-house in the village."

The three now turned into the garden of a pretty cottage, and were greeted at the door by a tall woman in black.

"Good afternoon, Mrs. Bletheringham, we have brought your son with us, and we want to show you how he has been

amusing himself." Frank indicated the squirt in the urchin's hand, and his own bespattered clothing.

"Did he do that?" said the lady indifferently. "Well, I don't see what that has got to do with me."

But—surely you are able to control your own children—you don't allow them to molest people in this disgusting manner?"

"If they don't behave when they are here, they know what to expect. I can't be looking after them all over the village. I don't know what the Government is for if it can't keep the children in order."

"But he tells me he does not go to school. Are you simply allowing him to run wild?"

"As for school, he doesn't like it. You see we are socialists. I should have thought you would know all about it. If you don't, my husband will tell you."

Mr. Bletheringham entered as she spoke, and, stepping over his son, who was sprawling on the floor, shook hands with the visitors.

They explained their errand, and Mr. Bletheringham showed scarcely more concern than his wife.

"You see, Mr. Ledingham, he never took to lessons. They don't interest him. He is inattentive and forgets."

"So I should imagine from what I have seen of him. I understand he neither goes to school nor has lessons at home. May I ask whether you intend him to learn anything at all?"

Mr. Bletheringham opened his eyes. "Well, I scarcely understand what you mean, Mr. Ledingham. He doesn't *like* learning."

"Your theories of education seem rather peculiar, I must say. What sort of a man do you expect him to grow up?"

"Well, one can never tell. Some day he may wake up and make us all ashamed that we thought him stupid. I think he is likely to be a very great man. In such cases it is wise to be very cautious. There is always danger in tampering with a young brain. It is so easy to destroy the originality of a child's mind: as easy as rubbing the

bloom off a peach, and what a tragedy it would be to maim a new soul before it got its strength! I have a book here that will explain the system we are working on."

Mr. Bletheringham took a step backward, and put out his hand for a book that was lying on a shelf near by. But he did not reach it. Instead, he threw up his hands, his hat fell off, and he sat down on it with considerable force. He appeared to be stunned by his fall, and Frank hastened to his assistance, but the result was unfortunate. Instead of raising the prostrate orator as he intended, he himself pitched forward, and fell with his elbow on a tender part of Mr. Bletheringham's anatomy. There was a howl of pain and anger, followed by a torrent of rather flowery language, as Frank rose from the ground in a state of bewilderment. The whole drama had taken place so suddenly and so unexpectedly that Walter was at a loss to understand what had really happened. He was soon enlightened. A wild whoop was heard and a grimy little figure darted out at the front door. Mrs. Bletheringham calmly advanced with a kitchen knife, and cut a piece of stout string, that was tightly stretched between the table leg and the dresser about six inches from the floor. Having coiled it up and put it in a drawer with a business-like air, she went and stood by the door, with the handle in her hand. There was no mistaking the hint implied by her attitude, and the two friends hastily took their departure.

When they had gone a few paces, Frank turned to his friend. "That lad has the makings of a worthless, idle man—perhaps a criminal, and some of the elder children are no better. What chance is there that they can ever be industrious citizens?"

"It doesn't look very hopeful at present certainly, but they may reform. After all, the love of work is a natural instinct. You like work, and so do I; we don't need anyone to drive us to it."

"No, but I suspect work is very like smoking. When the habit is acquired it gives a good deal of pleasure, but while it is being acquired the sensations are not so pleasant. Some

people never acquire the habit, and are very well content to go on without it. If you and I had not been obliged to work when we were younger, I don't think we should be quite so fond of it now. At any rate I don't think Blatchford's theory of education seems to work out very well in practice, do you, Walter?"

"I think it is as rotten as anything can well be; in fact, I think we have gone quite wrong over this education business. We intended to steer a middle course, but instead of that we have just got the two extremes. There is the extreme of individualism, as advocated by Blatchford; and the extreme of socialism, under which we are endeavouring to turn the children out, all to one pattern, in the State school, just as we stamp out a lot of aluminium shillings in the mint."

"Well, I don't think shillings are any the worse for being all alike—or children either, so far as it is possible to make them so, and that is not very far. But what middle course can you suggest?"

"I don't suppose you will agree with my suggestion. I don't think I was ever quite as advanced as you, and perhaps some things I have seen here have tended to make me less so,—but don't you think it would be better to have a number of schools under individual management, let them stand or fall on their merits, and let the parents decide which school was best suited to their children?"

"No, I can't say I agree with that. It would be simply introducing the evil principle of competition. I don't think there is anything really wrong with the system we have adopted, but certainly more control is needed. We must have a body of inspectors, who will go round to the homes and personally examine the children as to their state of education, and the parents as to their fitness to educate their children. If home education is not being properly carried out, the children must go to the State school, and it will be the business of the inspectors to see that they do go. I think there are some workers in the printing shop, and a few in the gas works who would make good inspectors. I will tell

the Appointment Committee to select a few, and get them installed in the town hall at once."

"Very well, I will leave it to you. Do you think all the people at the town hall are working efficiently?"

"Well, I have had some little cause to feel anxious about that, and I am thinking of appointing a few superintendents of inspectors to keep them up to the mark. There is a man at the boot factory and another at the soap works who seem very capable, and Miss Perkins of the laundry would make a good superintendent of the lady inspectors. I will get them round to the town hall to-morrow."

When Frank and Walter reached home, Blanche and her assistant were putting the finishing touches to the tea table. Joe Deacon was reclining in an easy chair, looking rather tired and depressed.

"Don't you think we could have the window open, Blanche?" said Frank, as he entered the room. "It is intolerably hot and stuffy."

"It was open when I came in," replied Blanche, seating herself at the head of the table, "but I shut it because I didn't think the air was fresh. In fact, there is rather a bad smell outside."

"Yes, I noticed it as I came along. I wonder what is the reason."

"I think I can tell you. The streets have not been swept since we came here, nor the dustbins emptied. The people next door are not as careful as they might be."

Frank's face showed concern. "There were some scavengers appointed by the Selection Committee, weren't there, Walter?"

"Yes, there were, but only one of them turned up, and he applied for work in the engineer's shop directly he got here."

"This is really serious," said Frank frowning. "We must call for volunteers at once."

"I am afraid that won't be much good. I have already mentioned it at the town hall, and volunteers were called for, but none came forward. Some men were even appointed to do the work, but they went back to their old situations as

soon as they had spent a day at it. You see it is not a very attractive job."

Frank sat frowning, and vigorously stirring his tea for some minutes. "I tell you what," he broke out. "This state of things cannot go on. What is wanted is an example. First thing to-morrow morning I will get a horse and cart from the warehouse, and set to cleaning the place myself. If nobody comes to help me, I will go on until it is finished. I must say I expected to find a little more public spirit among socialists."

"I will be with you for one," said Walter. "I think an example is all that is needed."

After tea the four sat down to a game of cards, but it soon became apparent that none of them had any heart for the game. A cloud seemed to hang over the party, and Blanche's efforts to raise their spirits were unavailing. After a game or two they gave it up, and Blanche went to attend to some domestic duties.

"You look very gloomy, Joe, old man," said Walter, as the three men settled themselves with their pipes. "Anything wrong at the works?"

"I think I ought to tell you," replied Joe, "that I have decided to give up my post of superintendent. I don't feel I am doing any good."

"Come, Joe," said Frank, "I know very well what sort of superintendent you are. If you can't do any good nobody can. Don't be hasty: what has upset you?"

"Well, to tell the truth, Mr. Frank, it has been coming on for some time—ever since that little do with Grimshaw. I am used to having my orders obeyed, and, as you know very well, you can't do any good at engineering unless orders are obeyed. But I don't seem to have any discipline here. I don't say the men are not decent chaps enough, most of them, but they don't forget that they are as good as I am, and most of them drawing more money. Each one wants to do the work his own way, and if I say anything they make jokes about giving me the sack. I don't want to be discharged, so I have discharged myself."

"I don't think you should be in a hurry to do that. Of course I see the difficulties, but still I should have thought you could have managed with a little tact. I suppose they are competent workmen?"

"Some of them are; some of the best have gone to the town hall, and some are not engineers at all."

"Not engineers? Then what are they doing in the engineer's shop?"

"Well, you see, they apply for work, and it is against the rules to refuse them. I have taken three on this week. I found out afterwards they had come from the tailors' shop—didn't get on with the superintendent there, so they applied to me for work, and I couldn't refuse them. One of them came near to smashing up one of the best machines, and himself too, if I hadn't been near to help him."

"That kind of thing can't go on," said Frank indignantly. "It is a root principle of socialism that if a man won't work he must starve, and work does not mean pretending to work at something you know nothing about, or working contrary to orders. If a man won't work properly, he must take the consequences. You must discharge him."

"Yes, that's quite right in theory, but when you come to apply it in practice it does not work out so well. Suppose I discharge a man—one of several things may happen. He may come round directly after and apply for a job, as Grimshaw did."

"Then refuse to take him on."

"Yes, I might do that; but then he might persuade his mates to discharge me."

"That system of men discharging the superintendent is insane. We shall have to alter it."

"Well, I have been of that opinion for some time. Do you know who invented it?"

"Gronlund, I think."

"No doubt he is an authority, but it would not take much practical experience to change his opinion."

"We will change his system, at any rate. In future I appoint and discharge all superintendents of workshops

until the Parliament is elected. The Appointment Committee can continue to appoint town hall officials and inspectors. So your men can't discharge you, Joe. Does that meet your difficulty?"

"Not altogether. You see, the men I discharge could quite well apply for work at the tailors' shop, just as the tailors have applied to me. While that can happen, discharging men only makes matters worse."

"That's another thing we shall have to alter. We must have a body of officials, say a Board of Employment, men and women, who will decide what work every man and woman in Newæra is to do, and they will have to do it or starve."

"The Board of Employment will have *their* work cut out."

"Yes, it will have to be a picked body of about fifty men and women. I will see about getting them appointed. I think we might take, say, ten men from your shop, ten women from the weaving shed, and ten from the laundry, five men from the bakery, and make up the odd fifteen with men and women taken from each of the various occupations, so that all will be represented. I will see about getting them to the town hall to-morrow, or rather, I think they will have to meet in No. 2 church; there will be plenty of room there."

"I daresay that plan will work out all right, Mr. Frank," said Joe rather dubiously.

"Oh, yes, it must work; and now, Joe, I think I have settled all your objections. If you discharge a man because he won't work, you need not be afraid he will go and waste time elsewhere."

"No, that's all right, Mr. Frank; but still I am afraid the most serious objection of all remains. If I discharge a man, and he can't get work elsewhere, he will have to starve; but I can't do it. I am not infallible; I make mistakes often, and sometimes I lose my temper. I am not the one to condemn a man to starve, and I won't take the responsibility of it."

"But, Joe," said Frank desperately, "you are practically

condemning the whole experiment. Is there no alternative? Can't you suggest anything, Walter? I don't know why we are stopped by these difficulties at every turn. I have read many descriptions of socialist societies, but there never seemed to be the least difficulty, nor any need of discipline or control; the people all worked, and worked well because they liked it. Why can't ours do the same?"

"I think the difference between our society and the ones you read about lies in this," said Walter. "We are dealing with human beings. The other societies were composed of imaginary beings, the creatures of someone's poetical imagination. It is very easy to imagine perfect men and women, but very difficult to find them."

"Perfect? yes—we can't expect perfection, but we know that the utmost care was exercised in the selection of our colonists; there is not a single man who was not a good, even an exceptionally good, citizen before he came here. You don't suggest that they were good citizens because they were afraid of getting the sack, or being put in prison?"

"No, I don't suggest that. I should rather put the case like this. Unless every single member of a society is perfect (which is, of course, impossible), someone will do wrong sometime; he will shirk his work, disobey an order, act carelessly, or something of the kind. There is not a man living who has not done some or all of these things at some time or other. Under the old scheme of society, the man who did one of these things would bring on himself certain consequences. Either he would suffer a loss of some kind, as when a business man or a shopkeeper is lazy or negligent, or he would be told by someone in authority, 'You must not do this,' and he would know that 'You must not do this' means, 'If you persist in doing this you will be made to suffer.' He would have the choice of desisting from wrongdoing, or bringing on himself certain unpleasant consequences. But in Newæra, at present, wrongdoing does not bring unpleasant consequences. A man may do wrong as often as he pleases with impunity. He cannot get the sack; he cannot get less than £2 a week; there are no policemen,

and no prisons. If there is a single idle man in the community, he can live on his fellows as long as he likes. You can't expect his superintendent to condemn him to death by starvation."

"Well, but his wrongdoing causes loss or suffering to the community, and he suffers along with all the rest. On the other hand, his good actions benefit himself and the community."

"Yes, that is quite true; but see how it works out. Suppose a man is lazy and wastes an hour. He gets an hour's wages for nothing. He is that much, say 1s., to the good. But next week, we will suppose, he is extra industrious; he works an extra hour, or works so much harder that he produces the equivalent of an extra hour's work. This extra hour's produce is divided among all the 10,000 inhabitants of Newæra. He gets a ten-thousandth part of a shilling extra, or would do so if we could divide things up as finely as that. So that wasting an hour pays him ten thousand times as well as saving an hour."

"No, he doesn't gain anything by wasting an hour; he still has only £2 a week; he is no better off."

"He is no better off, that is true. In a sense he is worse off, because he has suffered in character, which is the most valuable thing he possesses; but it is nevertheless true that he has taken from the community more than he has given to the community: he has made a good bargain, if you like to put it that way, and the less work he does, the better the bargain he makes with the community. If you can buy a pound of butter for 10d. you won't give 1s."

"Your whole argument rests on the false assumption that work is unpleasant. You assume that idling for an hour is more pleasant than working for an hour."

"I am only making the assumption with which we started that in every conceivable community of men and women imperfection will exist. There are sure to be some who will always prefer idling, and perhaps everyone would occasionally prefer it. The point is that in Newæra idling is not only pleasant (to those who like it), but profitable too. It is only

by idling that a man can get more out of the community than he puts in. We practically put a handsome premium on idleness, and no premium on industry."

"Well, Walter, I must say I am disappointed. I didn't expect you, of all people, to turn against me. You are talking just like my father used to do."

"Frank, old man, I am not turning against you; I am with you all the time, and I want to help you to make Newæra a success. But in order to do that, we must look facts in the face. There are a good many things that I can see more clearly than I did when I came here. I am only arguing that we must invent some way of making wrongdoing unpleasant, otherwise we shall simply see things going from bad to worse."

"Yes, I agree with that; it is evident we must have some form of restraint. Suppose we reduce the wages of anyone who does wrong, or discharge him for a week, and then take him on again. What do you say, Joe?"

"I can't say I care for either plan. If you starve a man for a week you may as well starve him for a year; the result will be the same: he will starve. As to reducing wages, I would rather not have it to do. You must remember that superintendents are human as well as those they superintend. I don't care for the job of deciding how much a man has forfeited by cheeking me, or working slow, or making mistakes. It is too great a responsibility."

"Well, then, suppose we set up a Board of Punishments. I will select, say, a dozen men and women, and send them to the town hall. The workshop superintendent will have power to inflict a fine, and if the man does not think it just, he can appeal to the Board for an impartial decision. Will you keep your post, and see how it works?"

"I will ask you to excuse me, Mr. Frank,—in fact, it is too late. I felt that I could do better work at the bench or the lathe than I could as superintendent, so I resigned my post, and my successor was elected on the spot."

"Your successor? And who may that be?"

"Grimshaw."

"Oh, but that is absurd. You don't mean to say your workers have chosen that man as superintendent?"

"I do, indeed. He has always been popular, because he is such a funny dog, and lately he has been talking a lot about a seven-hour day and £3 a week. He has prepared the ground well, and I don't think he intends to stop at superintendent. He has ambitions."

While Joe was speaking, Sam Deacon came in. He was a quiet, steady fellow, whose presence in the house was scarcely noticed, and of late he had almost always been out in the evenings. To-night he looked flushed, and his father eyed him narrowly, as he seated himself at the other end of the room with his paper.

Frank and Walter were a good deal upset by Joe's decision, and especially by his news about Grimshaw. The three sat smoking in silence some time; then Frank turned to Joe.

"You must let me find you a job at the town hall, Joe. I don't like the thought of your working under Grimshaw after all that has passed, and you will do capital work on one of the committees. Will you take charge of the Punishment Board that I am going to set up?"

"Well, no, I think not, if you will excuse me, Mr. Frank. You see, there has been a lot of talk about you finding jobs for your friends at the town hall. Of course, there is nothing in it, but folks will talk, and everyone knows we are living together. As to Grimshaw, he is not altogether a bad sort. I don't know how he will do as superintendent, but I shall be able to do a good day's work for the first time since I came here, and I don't suppose Grimshaw will interfere with me."

"Very well, have it as you like. But I see danger in this system of appointing superintendents from below. Do you know if it has been done in any of the other shops?"

"They have sacked their boss at the printing works," broke in Sam; "and about time, too."

"Oh, indeed," said Frank, looking round; "and what was the trouble at the printing works?"

"It all came about over Simple Ab," replied Sam. "I got

it from a pal of mine that works in the printing shop. It seems that Simple Ab isn't any good at printing. He did nothing last week but spoil 5,000 wage forms for the town hall. But Simple Ab gets £4 15s. a week, on account of his wife and kids. My pal is a master printer. He was getting his fifty bob a week before he came here, but now he only gets £2 a week, the same as the feeder girls. So my pal got sick of it, and he told the boss he was going to get more money, the same as Simple Ab, or else do less work, one of the two. The boss told him he couldn't have more money, so he said he would set that right, and he sat down and read the paper, and then the boss sacked him."

"Oh! then it was your friend who was sacked, not the superintendent?"

"My pal was sacked, and all the other chaps came out with him; only Simple Ab and the girls stopped in. So they had a meeting outside, and fixed it up to sack the boss, and that's what they did."

"But isn't Mr. Bletheringham upset at having caused all this trouble?"

"No, not he. The chaps collared him when they went in, and showed him the wage forms he had spoilt, and ask him if he thought they were worth £4 15s., and he said that was the amount of simple abstract something or other labour he had put into them or behind them, and that was what they were worth."

"And so they made your friend superintendent?"

"Oh, no; they made a chap called Saville superintendent. I don't think he is a printer by trade, but he's always shouting about the way this place is managed. He says there ought to be no money among socialists; everyone ought to take what he wants from the store, and a lot of us think the same. I expect it will get altered when Parliament is elected."

"But surely, Sam, you must see that plan would not work. It would simply result in a scramble, in which the weakest would come off worst."

“ Well, I don’t know ; a lot of us think that’s how it ought to be under socialism. My boss thinks so, and he says he will arrange it so if we put him in Parliament.”

Frank and Walter exchanged glances. Here was a new danger to be faced, but they forbore to discuss it till a more convenient time. Both were thinking of their investigation of the accounts at the town hall that afternoon.

CHAPTER IV.

SNOOK'S COW.

FRANK and Walter were as good as their word. Newæra was awakened next morning by a vigorous shovelling and sweeping in the High Street, and the colonists were not a little astonished on looking out to see their two leaders in their shirt-sleeves, shovelling dirt into a cart. The work proceeded slowly. First a length of street had to be thoroughly swept, and the dirt collected in little heaps. Then Frank brought up the cart, and shovelled in the dirt, while Walter visited the back-yards of the houses on either side, carried out the dust-bins, and, with Frank's help, tipped them into the cart. They were soon surrounded by a ring of spectators, who seemed to take the whole thing as a joke ; but as the two worked on silently and doggedly, visiting house after house, and cleaning the street as they went along, there was an uneasy feeling in the throng of onlookers that this was no joke, but deadly earnest.

"It's a shame that Ledingham and Sinclair should have this to do," said one. "What are all these people at the town hall for if they can't arrange for the cleaning of the streets?"

"It's just a piece of bad management, like a lot of other things in this place," said another; "and those two are responsible if anyone is. Why don't they arrange for regular dustmen here, as in every other town?"

"How would you like to take on the job?" said a third. "It's good, healthy work, and splendid exercise."

"I do think we might give them a hand," said the first speaker; "but as to doing it as a regular thing, making a profession of it, as you might say—well, it isn't exactly in my line; I am a skilled workman, a carpenter, and I should be wasted on street-sweeping."

Meanwhile Frank and Walter worked steadily on, taking no notice of those around them, and it was not very long before their example produced its effect. A second cart came rumbling up the street, and then a third, and a fourth. Soon every horse and cart in the village had been brought into service, and an army of volunteers was at work. But it was not until evening that the village was reduced to a decent state of cleanliness.

It was confidently hoped that the lesson would be sufficient, and that there would be no need to repeat it, but still there were no volunteers for the post of public dustman. Everyone agreed that the work ought to be done, and that the Government ought to see to it, but nobody seemed to feel it incumbent on himself to adopt the profession of scavenger. Why should he? There were a score of pleasant occupations open to anyone who chose to apply for work. Evidently the new Employment Committee would have to select men from the various workshops, and set them to scavenging, whether they liked it or not.

The great cleaning down ought certainly to have made Newæra a healthier and sweeter place. Healthier it was perhaps, but sweeter—strange to say, the stench became every day more intolerable. Were the drains defective? They had been laid by a firm of contractors who were above suspicion, and no expense had been spared. The matter was becoming a serious menace to the health of the community, and the members of the Management Committee decided to set out separately on exploring expeditions, and, using their noses as guides, to track the evil to its source. When they met two hours later, Blanche wore such a look of triumph that there could be no doubt as to her success.

"I have found out all about it," she cried, as she burst into the house. "It's Snook's cow."

Frank and Walter were amazed. "Cow? Snook's cow? What a disagreeable beast—but surely—not a cow?"

"You see, he's a vegetarian," explained Blanche.

"I suppose cows generally are," said her brother, "but is this particular cow a bull, or,——"

"No, not the cow, Snook."

"Snook what? a bull, or a vegetarian, or a cow?"

"Now, do be quiet and let me tell you about it. Snook is the Newæra cow-keeper, and he is a vegetarian on humanitarian grounds. It seems one of the cows was taken ill. It had some disease of the mouth and could not eat. His principles would not allow him to have it killed, so the poor beast was crawling about for a week, and finally died, of starvation I suppose. I learned all about it from his wife. She says he is a very humane man, and cannot bear the thought of an animal being killed."

"And when did this happen?" asked Frank, beginning to have an inkling of the truth.

"Nearly a month ago, as far as I can find out."

"And where is the beast?"

"In the field at the back of his house. It has lain there ever since, at least so Mrs. Snook told me; I didn't investigate; it's simply terrible round there, and I came away as soon as I could."

"But I don't understand. Do you mean to say his vegetarian principles prevent him having the thing buried?"

"Oh, no, not his principles, but you see there is nobody to do it. He says it is not his business—the Government ought to do it."

"Well, then, why didn't he apply at the town hall?"

"Mrs. Snook says he did apply there, but they did nothing; at least, they asked for volunteers to bury it, but none came forward."

"So the thing has been poisoning the neighbourhood ever since. We must see to this, Walter. What do you think had better be done?"

"Oh, please don't go near it," cried Blanche in alarm. "I am sure you will yet typhoid. I feel perfectly sick with it."

"I think we have done our share of scavenging," said Walter. "Somebody else ought to take a turn."

"Yes, but who? Nobody has volunteered, and we can't compel anyone to undertake a job like that."

"No, of course not. Suppose we offer a reward?"

"I don't think we ought to hold out the incentive of gain, but we might offer a title—say a knighthood."

"Of course! That's the very thing. I am not sure whether a mere knighthood will be a sufficient inducement, though. The matter is extremely urgent. Suppose we offer an earldom while we are about it, and make it conditional on the thing being put under ground before to-morrow night."

"I think you had better make it hereditary," suggested Blanche. "I don't believe he will survive it."

"Oh, that's all right. Earldoms always are hereditary. I'll go along to the town hall at once, and see the Honours Committee about getting out the notice. I think we had better send the town crier round, even if we have to appoint one specially."

Frank set off post-haste and made the necessary arrangements. As he was leaving the town hall, the head accountant approached him.

"I have just been going into the accounts and stock-books, Mr. Ledingham, and I find the position is rather serious. The supply of corn is very short, and we are almost out of sugar, rice, cocoa, and a whole lot of things that we can't produce."

"But have none been ordered from the mainland?"

"We have sent a small order, but we have scarcely anything left in the bank, so we can only order things as we are able to send out goods to pay for them, and we have scarcely enough coming into the warehouse for our home consumption."

"How about the boot factory? There was quite a large production of boots last time I looked into things."

"Yes, that was one of our best lines, but for nearly a fortnight now the factory has been closed. They have had a breakdown with their engine."

"And what have the workers been doing?"

"I think most of them have been out in the country. We did set them to build a wall round the Green, but they didn't get very far with it, and after all, it does not make much difference; they draw their wages just the same, and draw

supplies from the stores, but, of course, they are not producing anything."

"I will see about it at once. Do you know if the engine is being repaired?"

"Yes, the mechanics' shop had instructions about it, but I don't know what they are doing. They promised those pumps a month ago—that would have been something to send over the water, but they have not come in yet."

"I will go round to the workshop at once," said Frank, "and see if I can hurry them up."

Frank had not been to the engineers' shop since Deacon's dismissal, and he was interested to see how things were progressing under the new management. As he approached the shop he heard the exhaust of the engine, and, entering the door, he almost fell over the crouching figure of a workman, who appeared to be asleep, with his back against the wall, and his head propped on his hand. Hastily apologizing, he passed into the workshop. He at once saw Deacon bending over a lathe, but otherwise the place seemed deserted. Looking round, he perceived another figure huddled up behind the planing machine, and on going forward he saw a long row of men, sitting underneath a bench, each one engrossed in thought, with eyes fixed on the ground and forefinger pressed to puckered brow. The air seemed to tremble with the intensity of their cogitations, but perhaps it was only the engine.

Frank was thoroughly mystified, and applied to Joe for an explanation.

"You see, Mr. Frank, there was a notice offering titles to inventors—knighthoods, baronetcies, and so on. They are all inventing—at least, that is what they are supposed to be doing." Joe's eye twinkled.

"And where is the superintendent? Does he allow this sort of thing to go on?"

"I think Mr. Grimshaw is inventing, too. You'll find him in the drawing office. I'm sorry I'm not an inventor myself."

Full of indignation, Frank made his way to the drawing office, and there found Grimshaw as Joe had said.

Mr. Grimshaw may have been inventing: certainly he was not doing anything else, except smoking a cigar and regarding his feet on the drawing desk in front of him.

He seemed a little disconcerted when he saw Frank, and quickly assumed a more normal attitude.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Grimshaw. I called in to see how you are getting on with those pumps for export. We are badly wanting them to make up a shipment. I have just come from the town hall, and they tell me we are running short of some important stores."

"The pumps will be ready shortly, Mr. Ledingham. My private opinion is that this export trade is a mistake. We ought to be making things for our own use, not supplying the capitalists on the mainland."

"Unfortunately we cannot make or produce coffee, cocoa, rice, or sugar, and we have not enough corn to last till our own crop is ready. We have to pay for what we want with our manufactures."

"That may be so. I think there are a good many things in this place that might be managed differently."

"No doubt that is so: the election will take place in a week or so, and I shall not be sorry to be rid of the responsibility of the management. In the meantime I am responsible, and I should like to know what is being done about those pumps, and also about the engine at the boot factory, which has been stopped, I understand, for about a fortnight."

"I have told you the pumps will be ready shortly. I have sent some men to repair the engine. I take all the responsibility for the engineering work in Newæra—the whole responsibility, Mr. Ledingham."

"Very good; I hope you will see that no time is lost, but I must say the appearance of the workshop when I came in did not suggest any great urgency. I think all the workers but one were asleep."

"I take responsibility for what the workers are doing, Mr. Ledingham. I may say that none of them are asleep. They are at work on inventions."

"Come, Mr. Grimshaw, you are a sensible man ; you can't seriously tell me all those men are inventors ! "

"I really cannot undertake to say whether all of them are inventors. I cannot look into their minds ; and nobody knows whether he can invent or not till he has tried. They are trying."

"And how long do you propose to pay them £2 a week for 'trying,' while the colony is drifting into a famine for want of their work ? "

"That I can't say. As to your beggarly £2 a week, the less said about that the better. That is one of the things that will have to be altered. I suppose you don't suggest that Watt was not worth £2 a week while he was inventing the steam engine, or Parsons while he was inventing the steam turbine, or Marconi while he was inventing wireless telegraphy ? Do you think it right that I should be managing an important factory, and carrying on original investigations at the same time, for the wretched pittance the present Government doles out ? "

"I don't know whether it is right or not, but I am quite certain that the wretched pittance will not be forthcoming long, unless a good deal more work is turned out."

"Very well, Mr. Ledingham, we shall see about that. In the meantime, as I have ventured to remind you, I am responsible for what goes on here, and I have no doubt there are a good many things needing your attention at the town hall and elsewhere. You have offered rewards for inventions, and inventors must live while they are inventing. I don't propose to allow them to starve in garrets, as they do in England."

Inwardly raging, Frank turned and left the place. He comforted himself with the thought that in a fortnight the responsibility would be off his shoulders. It was reasonable to hope that the collective good sense of the whole people would be able to accomplish what he felt to be beyond his individual power.

Arriving at home, he was met by Blanche with a long face.

"I am awfully sorry, Frank, but there is absolutely

nothing for tea, not even bread. I did not get home till late this afternoon, and when I went to the stores I found that they were every one completely cleared out of food—at least, they only had mustard.”

“We can’t live on mustard,” said Frank with a laugh. “But what an extraordinary thing! It has never occurred before?”

“No; I have generally done my shopping in the morning. They said something at the stores about a new order for limiting supplies from the warehouse. I thought you would know something about it.”

“Ah, yes, now I understand. We had to fix a daily allowance, in order to make the stock hold out. It is certainly very awkward.”

Joe Deacon had just come in, and had overheard the latter part of this dialogue.

“I think I can help you out of the difficulty, Miss Ledingham. You can get bread and a good many other things from Jack Forbes at 110, High Street.”

“And how in the world can Jack Forbes supply bread when all the stores are sold out?” said Frank in astonishment.

“Well, you see, Mr. Frank, ever since the order for limiting supplies, the stores have run short towards evening; in fact, lately they have been sold out by dinner-time, and they don’t open till ten now, so a good many of the workers run a risk of not being able to buy anything to eat. So a lot of them asked Jack Forbes and one or two others to buy for them. Of course he has to stay away from his work to do it, so he loses his wages, and he has to charge a bit more than store prices to make up for that.”

Frank’s temper had been a little ruffled in the afternoon, but he had managed to restrain it. This was too much.

“I will not have it,” he cried, stamping his foot. “It is simply introducing the middleman, capitalist, profit-grabbing robber of the earnings of the people that we have gone to all this trouble to abolish. I won’t stand it. I’ll put a stop to it at once!” and he seized his hat.

Joe put a restraining hand on his arm. "I wouldn't be hasty, Mr. Frank. Have some tea and think it over. I will go and get what's wanted, otherwise we shall have nothing till to-morrow dinner-time."

Frank could not affect complete indifference to this argument, but he was not convinced, and was beginning a fresh outburst, when Joe again restrained him.

"You see, Mr. Frank, Jack Forbes is a thoroughly decent chap, who has done it chiefly out of kindness. I daresay he does make a bit more than his regular wages, but he does a great service to some of the people. There's Mrs. Williams, now; she's very delicate, and her little girl is poorly. It was death to her to have to stand for an hour or more in the queue outside the store, and if she did not go very early, and wait her turn, she would find everything sold out. It is nothing to her to pay Forbes a few pence a pound more, and have it brought round to her house. She can afford it, and so can others."

Frank was thoroughly dissatisfied with the turn things had taken, but he allowed himself to be persuaded so far as to allow Joe's projected expedition. The food was bitter to him nevertheless, and he spent the evening moodily revolving schemes for adjusting supply to demand without leaving room for the sinister profit-making principle and the throat-cutting competition which he foresaw clearly enough. He was just finishing a rather fruitless discussion of ways and means with Walter, when a loud knocking was heard at the front door.

Miss Evans (Blanche's assistant), who happened to be staying late that day, went to interview the visitor, and presently returned with a white face.

"There's a gentleman—at least, there's someone at the door wanting to speak to you, Mr. Ledingham."

"Very well, you might just ask him to step in, please."

Miss Evans hesitated. I think he has been—that is, he seems to have been—he's in his working clothes, and I think not very clean, but——"

"Oh, that doesn't matter. We are all workers here,

though we don't work much overtime; ask him to come in. What's the matter, Miss Evans? You look as if you had seen a ghost."

Miss Evans left the room without another word, and was heard to call, "Mr. Ledingham is in here; please come in," and immediately the kitchen door banged.

Heavy and uncertain steps were heard in the passage, and the visitor appeared as Frank rose to meet him.

He was a short, thick-set, middle-aged man, with a large head, rather coarse features, and wandering lack-lustre eyes. He was dressed in rough, workman's clothes, and heavy boots, which were covered with earth, and he carried a spade, which he used as a walking stick. The most noticeable thing about him, however, was plainly perceptible some instants before he appeared—a most pervading and appalling odour.

Blanche faintly ejaculated, "Snook!" and retired to a far corner with her handkerchief to her nose.

Frank advanced to the middle of the room, and eyed the man with curiosity.

"Well, neighbour," he said cheerfully, "my name is Ledingham; did you want to speak to me?"

The visitor fell back a step, and leaned against the sideboard. He gazed slowly round the room, and then took a large bottle from his pocket, pulled out the cork with his teeth, and took a long pull at the contents.

"Come, my good sir," said Frank rather sharply; "this is not Newæra manners. What is it you want?"

"Wantsh my lordship," said the visitor, after a pause.

"You want what? We have not got anything of yours; you must have made a mistake."

"Wantsh my lordship. Gimme it"; and he held out his hand.

"I really don't understand you. Please explain yourself if you can."

"Gimme my lordship. I buried her, and I not be done out 'f it. Gimme it."

"You've buried? Ah! the cow—you've buried the cow, my good fellow—is that what you mean?"

"I buried her all m'shelf: gimme my lordship."

"Well, if you have really buried that horrid creature, you are a benefactor, and we are all indebted to you." Frank advanced to shake hands, but hastily stepped back, and took his stand at a respectful distance.

"You not d'shieve a poor man: gimme my lordship."

"Yes, yes; you shall have your earldom right enough, but I can't give it you, and I don't think you are in a fit state to appreciate the honour. Go to the town hall to-morrow morning, and I will see that you get your rights."

"You the bosh of thish plashe; you gimme it."

Frank turned to consult Walter, who had taken his place near Blanche, and was bending down with his face on his arm.

"What can we do to satisfy the old fellow? Of course he can have his earldom, but—we must really do something to get rid of him."

"Quickly, please!" gasped Blanche.

"Hadn't we better see whether he has really buried it?" suggested Walter. "It's impossible to doubt that he's been near it; but——"

"Perhaps it would be as well. It is only a few minutes from here; would you mind just running round to see?"

"Oh, well, it's rather late, and I am afraid there is scarcely light enough. After all, we might as well satisfy him and get rid of him; no harm will be done—he won't remember anything about it to-morrow."

"Yes, but how? I don't know anything about making earls. Don't they do it with a sword? We haven't got such a thing. Here, Blanche, would you be so good as to fetch me the carving knife—the long one, you know."

Blanche left the room with alacrity, her face buried in her handkerchief, and keeping as far as possible from the visitor. She returned in a minute with the long knife.

"Now, Mr. What's-your-Name," said Frank, advancing knife in hand, "I am going to give you your lordship. Kneel down!"

The candidate for honours looked rather doubtfully at the knife, and seemed inclined to fortify himself with the aid of his bottle. After a minute's hesitation, and in response to Frank's peremptory gesture, he slowly sank on to all fours, the spade clattering down beside him.

Frank advanced to the grovelling figure, with what might have been a regal air, but for the necessity of holding his nose with his left hand.

"Arise, Earl of Bury!" he commanded in a loud voice, lightly touching the recumbent figure on the shoulder with the blade of the knife. Then, seeing that his lordship did not rise, he could not resist the temptation of pricking the back of his neck with the point. The result was instantaneous. Lord Bury rose with a howl, and seemed disposed to grapple with Frank, but fell back at sight of the formidable weapon in his hand.

Frank repented of his frivolous act, and sought to appease the outraged nobleman. Indeed, his wrath was short lived. Frank addressed him as Lord Bury, and instantly a smile of satisfaction broadened his features. Still he hesitated, not appearing to realize that the ceremony was completed. Frank felt he could not hold out much longer, so hastily seizing a large blue bow which Blanche had been taking off her hat, he pinned it on the noble breast, then took his lordship by the shoulders, and fairly ran him down the passage and into the street.

CHAPTER V.

TO EACH ACCORDING TO HIS NEEDS.

THE first Newæra General Election was over. It had passed quietly enough, with very little of the feverish excitement usually associated with elections. No doubt this was partly due to the fact that the colony was not old enough to have developed strongly-marked planes of cleavage. There was in some quarters a tendency to adhere to the old Liberal-Conservative traditions, and it might be expected that this tendency would become more strongly marked as time went on. All the various schools of socialism were represented in the colony, and a certain amount of controversy arose between the adherents of the Fabian, Marxian, and other parties, but such controversies had at present not much reality. The questions which agitated the community were of a practical rather than a theoretical nature, and the chief among these questions was that of the distribution of commodities. There was very general dissatisfaction with the arrangements which had so far been in force. The special provision for the wives and children of married workers had been a frequent cause of jealousy. The highly skilled, unmarried mechanic, receiving his £2 a week, though this was ample for his requirements, was apt to look askance at his less skilful or less industrious mate, or at the unskilled labourer who assisted him, and drew £1 or 30s. more at the week end. The women workers had little cause for dissatisfaction, since almost all of them were earning very much more than they could ever have hoped to receive in the Old Country; but even amongst them jealousy was not infrequent, and there was a disposition to shun the more difficult and arduous tasks in favour of those that were more pleasant and equally well paid. The position of the superintendent,

who was liable to be discharged by the workers, and was called upon to allot to each her more or less agreeable task, was not an enviable one, and there had been many changes, and constant disorganization through this cause. It had therefore come to be a very general sentiment in the colony that all money wages should be abolished, and that the principle, "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs," should be put into operation, by allowing each worker to draw what he or she required from the common store without payment. There were not wanting those who strongly opposed this proposal. Frank Ledingham,⁸ addressing a meeting in the public hall, gave some account of the financial position of the colony, and predicted that the system of unlimited credit would inevitably lead to bankruptcy; but his speech was not well received, and was probably the cause of his failure to secure election. Walter Grimshaw seemed likely to take a foremost place in the political sphere, and his denunciation of the cheese-paring policy which had been pursued under Frank's Dictatorship was received with acclamation. Of official candidates for election there were none. The election was carried out on a plan which had the merit of simplicity, though it was recognized that it could scarcely form a model for adoption in the larger communities which were to follow in the footsteps of the pioneer State. An alphabetical list of all the workers, male and female, was printed. Each voter, on entering the polling room at the town hall, was presented with a copy of this list, and was instructed to place a mark opposite the names of the thirty workers whom he desired to see elected. The thirty members who had received the greatest number of votes were declared elected, and considerable amusement was caused when the first list of Members of Parliament appeared in the *Record*, and it was seen that Lord Bury was at the head of the poll. The nobleman had been a good deal fêted, and had come to take himself and his title very seriously. To hobnob with a lord was a new experience with most of the Newærans, and, to tell the truth, it was an experience that occurred rather too

frequently for the good of his lordship's health and dignity. He dressed in the height of Newæra fashion, and was "as drunk as a lord" more often than not.

Neither Frank nor his sister was a Member of Parliament. Apart from Frank's outspoken denunciation of the popular scheme of distribution, there was very general dissatisfaction with the results of his management. There were very few Newærans who had not a grievance of one kind or another, and in most cases "the Government"—that is, Frank—came in for the blame. Blanche's experience of public life had not been a very happy one. She had often come into collision with the women superintendents in connection with the numerous industrial hitches that had taken place: she was known to share her brother's views about the free distribution scheme, and she had plainly intimated her desire to retire from public life, otherwise she might have been elected, as she was very well liked by the mass of the people. Walter Sinclair was elected. He had made no attempt to put himself forward as a candidate, and had taken no part in any of the political meetings, but he was thoroughly respected and liked, and his name was familiar to everyone in the colony. The remaining Members of Parliament (of whom four were women) were in almost all cases superintendents of the various factories, or heads of departments at the town hall. This result was very natural, since most of the superintendents had been placed in their positions by the election of the workers, and in many cases political considerations had influenced their appointment.

Parliament met on the day following the election, and was not long in getting to work. The first measure to receive attention was that for the free distribution of commodities. It was passed almost unanimously (Walter spoke and voted against it) and with very little debate. It was to take effect on the following Monday, but it was decided, rather illogically, that the usual payment of wages should take place on the Saturday preceding, since otherwise there might be a feeling of dissatisfaction among the workers. It would seem too much like doing a week's work for nothing if

no payment were given, and it was also thought that a certain amount of Newæra coin should be allowed to circulate in the colony, as it would facilitate private transactions and exchanges among the members. The exchequer returns showed that a good deal of the money which had been issued as wages had not been paid in at the stores in return for commodities. There must therefore have been a certain amount of saving or hoarding of coin. These accumulations of coin would of course lose almost all their value when all commodities came to be distributed free, but no actual hardship would be inflicted on those whose savings were thus depreciated, since all would be able to obtain whatever goods they desired, without limit of quantity.

"I feel sure there has been an accident during the night," said Blanche at breakfast time. "I woke up several times with an uncomfortable feeling that something had happened or was going to happen, and each time I seemed to hear voices outside, as if a lot of people were walking about the village, and once I distinctly heard a woman scream."

"I expect it was Lord Bury going home," said Walter. "I heard something myself this morning, but I don't think it was an accident; there was too much laughing."

"What sort of an M.P. does Lord Bury make?" asked Frank. "He was a good deal inflated with his title—what he will be with M.P. after his name I can't imagine."

"It is a pity the people have made such a fuss of him," Walter replied. "I believe he is really not a bad sort, and he has certainly rendered an important service to the State. If he fortifies himself with a little spirits occasionally, no one can blame him; but he has had his head turned."

"I know one has to be careful in asking questions of a Cabinet Minister," said Frank, smiling, "but, if it is not an improper question, what measures are likely to be brought forward in the near future? Is anything decided?"

"No. We have met so recently that there has been no time to formulate a definite policy. One thing will have to be dealt with very soon indeed: that is, the allocation of employment. I was talking with one of the members on

Friday, who was the agricultural superintendent, or rather one of them. He estimates that there must be about 1,500 workers, men and women, on the farms, and that all the work could be done easily by 150. They go out there and demand work; most of them don't know the least thing about agriculture, but he cannot refuse them work, of course, so they picnic in the fields and trample down the corn. Every day you may see them streaming out of the village to their 'work.'"

"But what is the good of a superintendent if he can't put a stop to that kind of thing? Do you mean to say he has been sitting down and letting that go on under his eyes?"

"I gather so. He says—and I quite believe it—that the position is an impossible one. He was appointed by his workers, and if he makes things unpleasant for them they will discharge him. Of course, you have latterly taken the appointing of officials into your own hands, but you didn't discharge him, and there he is."

"No," said Frank; "I can't be everywhere. I have had my hands full with looking after things at the town hall and in the village. He is a genuine socialist, I suppose, and ought to make the interest of the State his first concern."

"Yes, no doubt; but I suspect there has been another influence at work. He is more of a politician than a farmer—indeed, I doubt whether he knows anything about farming; but he has been ambitious to get into Parliament, and, of course, the greater the number of contented workers in his department, the more votes he gets. He didn't put it to me so baldly as that, of course, but it was quite evident what he had in his mind."

"Well," said Frank with a sigh, "I am glad the responsibility is off my shoulders. I suppose the collective wisdom of the colony will be capable of setting things right, but I must say they have a most extraordinary propensity for going wrong."

"Yes, I have noticed that myself; but at any rate Parliament will tackle this employment question seriously within the next few days. Your Employment Committee has made

spasmodic efforts to put the workers in their proper places, but, I am afraid, with very little result. If a worker was given a job he didn't like, he was not long in throwing it up and applying for work elsewhere, and he was not likely to be refused, because most of the superintendents were candidates for Parliament, and to refuse a man work was to turn away a voter. The Employment Committee could not be hunting the workers round all the time."

"Well, I wish you joy of your undertaking, Walter. I can't tell you what a relief it is to be rid of the responsibility. I suppose I shall have to apply for work at the engineer's shop. I am glad I shall not be under Grimshaw, as he has got into Parliament."

"Don't you think of applying for the post of superintendent? You have plenty of experience of managing an engineering shop."

"No, I think I would rather leave that to someone else. I don't think the post of superintendent is an enviable one—if he does his duty. What do you say, Blanche?"

"I'm sure I don't want to be a superintendent. I shall try to get into the millinery department. I suppose we had better go round and apply at once, hadn't we, Frank? We are only ordinary workers now."

"I was just going to propose that we take a day off," said Frank. "I think we have earned a holiday, and I should like to have a look round the fields, and see what prospect there is of a good crop. If that fails, I see nothing for it but to shut up shop. Will you come with me?"

"Oh, yes, I should love it. Would you mind waiting while I run round to No. 3 store? It will be open in a few minutes. There is a hat there I have had my eye on for some time, but it was too expensive. I suppose I can get it for nothing now the free distribution is to take place."

"Yes, of course; but I think you should go round at once. You may not be the only lady who has had an eye on that hat. Is it one of the Newæra pattern?"

"Oh, Frank, what an idea! You don't think I would make myself such a guy!"

"I should like to see the hat that would make Miss Blanche a guy," said Walter. "What is the Newæra pattern?"

"Thanks for the compliment, if it is intended for one. I don't propose to put on a Newæra pattern hat, even to give you the satisfaction of seeing me a guy."

"But what do you mean by the Newæra pattern?"

"I am sorry I can't compliment you on your observation. Surely you must have seen them! They were designed by one of the officials at the town hall. Something like a Salvation Army bonnet turned hind before, with a ridiculous pom-pom of red ribbon in front."

"I am sorry I have not had much time for observing ladies' hats. What was that?"

A confused uproar of many voices suddenly made itself heard. Angry voices of women they seemed to be. Occasionally there was a scream, then a dull roar, a babel of voices, rising and falling, but never ceasing for an instant.

The three friends seized their hats, and rushed out into the street.

There were very few people about, but it was evident that the noise proceeded from a part of the street to the left, in the direction of the Green, which was hidden from view by a sharp bend. On turning this corner they were confronted with a strange sight. The whole street was blocked by a struggling and shouting mass of women; there was not a man visible. The crowd was gathered in front of No. 3 store, which was devoted entirely to drapery, millinery, and all the various articles with which women are wont to clothe and adorn their persons. The store itself appeared to be full of women; those outside were struggling to gain an entrance, but those immediately round the door were packed so closely that they could scarcely move, and occasionally a cry of pain came from the midst of the dense, struggling mass. As the three approached, there was a movement in the crowd; its density round the doorway seemed to slacken, and suddenly about half-a-dozen women were ejected from the interior, and made a path for themselves to the outside of the crowd.

"Oh, there is my hat!" cried Blanche despondently, as the first of them emerged, clutching in one hand a crumpled mass of straw, from which hung by a few threads a yard of brim and a few wisps of trimmings. Under the other arm she carried a roll of cloth. She was followed by what at first appeared to be a species of Siamese twins. It resolved itself into a large stout woman, hugging to her bosom a dressmaker's dummy, clothed in a stylish garment, evidently intended for a lady of slim proportions, but with one sleeve missing. They were followed by others, all laden with booty in a more or less damaged condition, from having been forcibly dragged through the densely-packed throng.

"Well, I have seen one or two bargain sales," said Blanche, as they made their way through the fringe of the crowd, "and I have heard that the things were being 'given away,' but they were lonely deserts compared to this. I suppose I shall have to be content with my old hat."

"Never mind, Miss Blanche," said Walter; "the resources of Newæra are not exhausted, and I believe the Newæra pattern is not so bad after all. If you like I will instruct the town hall to get out a new design. I can do anything now I am an M.P."

Further along the street, at No. 2 store, a similar scene was being enacted, but the crowd, consisting mainly of men and children, was smaller and less excited. The street here was strewn with rice, a bag of which had evidently burst while being carried through the crowd. All sorts of receptacles were in use—buckets, baskets, portmanteaux—and all who emerged from the store had bulging pockets. One man carried his hat full of tea; another had a huge mass of butter in both hands; and a third had two hams and a cheese.

The three friends passed on towards the Green, where Walter turned off to the Parliament Hall, while Frank and Blanche struck off to the right along a side street leading to the open country. Looking back towards the village, they noticed a man with a hand-cart, into which he was loading sacks of flour; another man was bringing them out of the back entrance of No. 5 store.

"There is Jack Forbes replenishing his stock," said Frank. "Have you been buying your groceries from him lately?"

"Yes, either from him or from another man in the village. It is much more convenient; there is such a crowd at the stores, and everything is sold out before midday. I can't understand how it is that Forbes and the other man can go on selling all day long, whereas the stores are completely cleared out in an hour or so."

"I think it is not difficult to explain. Forbes sells at much higher prices than the stores, so the people buy smaller quantities. If he finds himself running short, he raises his prices, so that some people will go without rather than pay so much, and others will buy as little as will keep them going. I have no doubt he makes a very good thing of it, but I hope Parliament will put a stop to his little game. I don't know how you will manage, though; you certainly cannot take part in a scramble like that. Are Forbes's prices very much higher now?"

"I heard he was charging as much as 1s. 6d. for a quatern loaf one day last week, but it doesn't affect us, because he lets me have everything I want at store prices, and sends them round to the house."

"But—I don't understand—do you mean he is charging you 4d. for a loaf and other people 1s. 6d.?"

"Yes, since the beginning of last week."

"Do you know why? Is he a special friend of yours?"

"Oh, no. I don't quite understand it, but I fancy it must have something to do with Walter being in Parliament. He is doing the same to the Grimshaws, and you know Mr. Grimshaw is in Parliament."

"But, it is impossible that Walter should have used his official position to make a special arrangement of that kind."

"Oh, no. Mr. Sinclair knows nothing about the arrangement—I asked him. Not that I could see anything wrong in it even if he had arranged it."

Frank walked on very thoughtfully for a little while. "I think I begin to see through this mystery," he said at last.

"Mr. Forbes is evidently a clever man. Now, Blanche, I don't wish you to have anything to do with that special arrangement. If you buy from Forbes, you must buy like everyone else, and at the same prices, however high."

"Very well, I will if you wish it, but it will mean reducing our income by more than half. His prices to others are generally more than double what he charges us."

Nothing more was said on the subject, but Frank remained thoughtful. They were now in the heart of the country, in a charming lane with high banks on either side, covered with wild flowers. It appeared that Walter's friend must have exaggerated when he mentioned the 1,500 workers in the country. Not a soul was in sight; indeed, they saw no sign of life except the flocks of birds which rose from the fields at their approach, and settled down again when they had passed.

It was a beautiful autumn day, and the country was looking its best. The corn was ready for cutting, and so far as Frank could see, there was promise of a fair crop, though the fields were badly choked with weeds, and in places the corn was very much trampled down. This elicited some indignant remarks from Frank, who realized that the future of the colony, as a self-supporting community, depended on the abundance of this harvest.

When they had walked on for some miles without meeting anyone, the sight of a farmhouse reminded them that they had no provisions with them. As they did not wish to return to the village before evening, they determined to beg or buy some food at the farm, and find some shady spot for rest and refreshment.

When they had knocked several times at the house door, a decent old woman appeared. She looked at them rather curiously, but seemed reassured by their appearance, and willingly supplied them with all they required.

"I suppose the workers will be coming in for their dinner soon," said Frank, "or do you send it out to them? We didn't see anyone in the fields."

"No, neighbour," said the old lady, "you wouldn't see

them about here: they all went into the village early to be in time for the giving away they talk about. Myself, I don't believe there will be any giving away; but perhaps you have come from the village and know all about it?"

"Yes, there is no mistake about the giving away," said Frank with a smile; "they were hard at it when we left. But surely your people had plenty? They did not all need to go to the village for supplies?"

"Well, as to that, there was plenty if you cared to pay for it. Things have been awful dear this last week or two, and it is hard for us country people to have to walk four miles and then pay prices like that. I don't hold with this socialism. There's too many workers and too little work, for my way of thinking. But they do say this Mr. Ledingham has messed things up fearful. I expect it will be better now there is a Parliament; and if they are going to give us victuals for nothing, that will be something like."

Neither Frank nor his sister felt disposed to discuss politics with the old dame, so they bade her good day, and betook themselves to a little dell near by where they could recline on a grassy bank, shaded by trees, a clear stream at their feet.

"There is something I wanted to speak to you about," said Blanche, when their simple meal was ended, and they had stretched themselves at length on the soft bank. "I don't know quite how to begin, and perhaps I am foolish to mention it at all, but—someone has been annoying me a good deal lately."

"A good many people have been annoying me," said Frank lightly. "I never knew I had such a capacity for being annoyed before I came here; but what kind of annoyance do you mean? Some of the women workers? We shall both be able to retire into private life now, you know, and I shall not be sorry for the change."

"Oh, no, I don't mean that. I mean—attentions."

"Somebody been paying you attentions? I have not noticed anything of the kind, though of course I know everybody likes you. To whom do you refer in particular?"

"It is somebody in our house: I daresay you would not notice—in fact you could not——"

"You don't mean Walter?"

"Oh, no; Mr. Sinclair is always most respectful and friendly."

"Well, then, whom do you mean? Not Joe? Sam? Has Sam Deacon been annoying you?"

"Yes, it is Sam."

"The impudent fellow! I always thought him a quiet, decent chap, but I have scarcely seen anything of him lately—he takes all his meals in the village, and doesn't come in till late."

"No, and he doesn't get up till late either, and for some time he didn't come in at all. You see he has not been working this last month. They had a breakdown at his works, and they can't get it repaired, so he tells me."

"Not been working for a month? But he always gives his contribution to the household expenses, doesn't he?"

"Oh, yes; his superintendent gives the men their wages notes, because, of course, it is not their fault they are not able to work; but I don't think it has been a good thing for him to have nothing to do. I am afraid there are a good many things going on in the village that ought not to go on, Frank."

"Yes, but you say he has been annoying you. When does he annoy you?"

"Well, you see, I always go my rounds in the morning to the various factories and to the town hall, and then I come home and do my writing, and Sam is generally there."

"And do you mean to say he has been making love to you?"

"Well, yes, I suppose that is what it amounts to: not that he has said very much, but it is very uncomfortable, and I wish he would let me alone."

"I am glad you mentioned it, Blanche. I will speak to his father and arrange for Sam to live somewhere else. I should be sorry to lose Joe; he is such a genuine sort, and looks at things in such a sensible light. I have felt a little uneasy

about Sam sometimes, but I had no idea he was loafing in the house while I was out."

Blanche seemed much relieved to have got a painful subject off her mind, and the rest of the afternoon was spent in discussing plans for the immediate future. When they returned to the village, they found everything quiet. They looked in at one of the stores and found it bare. Not an article of portable property remained. Two windows were broken, and some of the fittings were damaged. A number of children were playing a noisy game in one of the upper rooms. Frank turned them out and closed the door.

Distribution "to each according to his needs" was carried out next day on rather different lines. It had come to be recognized that in a communistic society "the early bird catches the worm," and huge crowds of workers of all ages and both sexes were gathered round the various stores at a very early hour. As opening time approached, there was an eager movement to secure the best positions near the doors. As the rumble of the carts bringing the day's supplies from the warehouse was heard in the distance, the excitement became intense. As the first cart drew up, a woman in the crowd reached for a piece of bacon that was visible among the various packages. Instantly, as by a preconcerted signal, the cart was surrounded, men and boys climbed into it and handed out the booty to their friends below. In a few minutes the cart was cleared, and men and women were hurrying away in all directions with the spoils they had secured. Their less fortunate neighbours turned their attention to the second cart, and before it was empty, the crowds waiting at the other stores had got wind of what was happening and had come swooping down in a body. In less than half an hour the day's distribution was accomplished.

Jack Forbes and his competitor Wilson had meanwhile been waiting at the back of No. 5 store with hand-carts and helpers, ready to carry off their day's stock as soon as the stores should be opened. But the opening was delayed, and Jack Forbes, hearing the turmoil in the street, ran round to see what was happening. He was only in time to see the

last parcels of provisions being carried away from the now empty carts. There was no food to be bought that day, and the many workers who had not been fortunate enough or strong enough to secure any, were reduced to the necessity of begging or buying from their neighbours, or of going out to the fields and gathering the corn, or grubbing up potatoes and turnips. There were loud and angry protestations, and not a few were ready to say that if Frank's Dictatorship had been mismanaged, the new Parliament was utterly incompetent and should be dissolved at once.

It would have gone badly with the Ledingham household if Walter had not been able to get a supply of eatables from one of his colleagues in Parliament, who had taken advantage of Forbes's generosity by laying in a large stock at store prices.

Meanwhile Parliament had not been idle. It had been arranged that every worker in the colony should be summoned to appear at the town hall to be examined by the Employment Committee, and to have his work allotted to him. Each worker was to be given a card bearing the name of the department or factory in which he was to work, together with his own name and address. Payments were to be made at the town hall on production of the work card and a wage note signed by the superintendent of the department indicated on the card. After the first few days of free distribution, it was unanimously decided that this system could not be continued, and that it would be necessary to revert to money payments. The precise form of these payments was the subject of a long and heated debate which lasted the whole week. Some were in favour of simply going back to the original system, but with a reduced allowance for wives and children. This was as vigorously opposed by others, who advocated a differential system of payment, each worker receiving an amount depending on the class of work allotted to him. A third section pointed out that it would be impossible to secure smooth and contented working of the colony if some workers were arbitrarily allotted menial or arduous work at low rates of pay, while

others received more money for more congenial work. A fourth section was in favour of payment according to amount of work done, the rates being the same in all cases ; but when asked to explain how much street sweeping was equivalent to making a pair of boots, selling a pound of butter or writing a business letter, they were at a loss for a reply. A fifth section was in favour of equal wages for all, allowance for wives and children, and shorter hours for the less congenial occupations ; but when asked to explain how they would arrange the continuous running of a factory in which the superintendent worked two hours, the mechanics four, and the labourers eight, or the labourers two and the superintendent eight (there was a difference of opinion on this point), they too were at a loss for an answer.

Intimately connected with this problem of payments was that of distribution. Parliament had come clearly to recognize the fact that there was only a week's corn in the warehouse, and that some provisions had run out altogether. It was clearly necessary to reduce the present rate of consumption, but there was acute difference of opinion as to whether this should be done by further limiting the daily supply, or by raising the prices, or by limiting the amount of each article that might be supplied to each purchaser.

All were, however, agreed that the first task to be undertaken was getting Newæra to work. Many of the factories had ceased work altogether, through lack of raw material (there were no exports to pay for it), through breakdowns in the machinery, or because the superintendents had been discharged and none appointed in their places. A large number of workers had taken to "farming," the engineers' shop was still inventing, nearly a third of the male workers and a great many women were at the town hall organizing the work which was not being done, and an unknown number were engaged in authorship, painting, the advancement of science, and other works of public utility, which showed no tendency to replenish the warehouse. The first step, therefore, was to allocate the work, and the Members of Parliament volunteered to assist personally in

expediting the work. The village was divided into sections, and the workers were summoned to the town hall in batches.

It happened that Frank was among the first to obey the summons. He was ushered into a small office, and left standing in front of the desk at which Walter Grimshaw was seated, writing. When Frank had waited patiently for some minutes, Grimshaw looked up and coolly surveyed him.

"Your name?"

"Frank Ledingham." Grimshaw made an entry.

"Address?"

"27, Liberty Street."

"Occupation?"

"Engineer."

"Have you been working in the engineers' shop?"

"No. I think you must be aware——"

"Then what the devil have you been doing?"

"I have been managing this colony."

"Managing, eh? I have not seen much sign of management. Come, let us have no nonsense. We have no vacancies in the management department. What can you do?"

"I have done what I have undertaken to the best of my ability. I should prefer in future——"

"So much the worse for your ability. We do not go by preferences here. Have you done a single day's work since you came here?"

"As you apparently do not consider the superintendence of an industrial community work, I can only remind you that I undertook personally to clean the streets of the village when no one else could be induced to do it."

"Hm! So I heard. Short!"

An attendant entered from the next room.

"Give this man a card for the cleansing department, and show in the next."

It was not till Frank had received his card, learnt where he was to obtain the tools of his trade, and set out on his way home, that he fairly realized what had happened. He

was at first inclined to be downcast, even indignant; but his disposition was naturally cheerful, and he soon recovered his spirits. The work was certainly not what he would have chosen, and he had little doubt that Grimshaw had allotted it to him in payment for the severe reprimand he had received from Frank, but after all, it was honest work, which he could do well. As to the welfare of the colony, which was always uppermost in his mind, it now rested largely in the hands of a man who was certainly resolute, who knew his own mind, and who would probably contrive to get his wishes carried out. Frank could not disguise from himself that Newæra, under his own management, had made a bad start, and had reached the verge of bankruptcy within three months of its inauguration. He was not sorry to be allowed to take his place as a passive spectator of the future progress of the colony, under the administration of the chosen representatives of the people, led by a man who would not easily be deterred from the accomplishment of his aims. He was not without misgivings as to the result, but could scarcely restrain a secret feeling of satisfaction at the thought that if failure did result, his own unsuccessful efforts at management would be to some extent vindicated, and that, in any case, the new administrators were likely to find their task a good deal less simple than they had anticipated. He rather shrank from the thought of telling Blanche the news of his appointment, but determined to get it over quickly and make the best of it.

Nodding to Sam Deacon, whom he found in the sitting-room, he went in search of his sister, and was distressed to find her in the kitchen, leaning on the table with her face buried in her arms. She looked up on his entrance, and he saw that she had been crying.

"Why, Blanche!" he said, taking a seat near her; "what's amiss? Have you had a disappointment at the town hall too?"

"Oh—the town hall—yes, I have been to the town hall, and I am to—I forget what—oh, yes—wash the dishes at the restaurant, the odious man!"

"Well, cheer up, I daresay it won't be so bad as it sounds. I am to sweep the streets—it will not be the first time. After all, we are just workers like the rest; the work has to be done, and we can't expect to pick and choose."

"Frank, I want to leave this place. I can't stay here any longer. I will go to my aunt in London until I can settle what to do. I can't stop here." Blanche's face was flushed, and she spoke vehemently.

"Why, Blanche, I am surprised to hear you talk like that—turn tail so soon, just because you have to do some work that is not to your fancy."

"Oh, it's not the work; I don't care about that. But, Frank, I have—I have been insulted, and I can't stop in this house. I want to leave at once."

"Insulted? In this house? Who has insulted you?" Frank's face hardened.

"You know I said something on Monday——"

"Has Sam insulted you? Tell me about it."

"Oh, I can't tell you about it; but I don't want to see him again, ever."

Frank rose from his seat. He was ominously calm. "Very well," he said, "I think we can manage that. I didn't cease to be an Englishman when I came to Newæra."

"Oh, Frank!" Blanche cried in alarm; but Frank was gone, and the door was closed behind him.

Exactly what happened in the sitting-room Blanche never knew. Whatever it was, it did not take long. Sam Deacon passed the kitchen door muttering oaths of vengeance, and slammed the front door. He did not appear again.

Next morning, Frank was out early with brush and shovel. Not having met his superintendent, he was without instructions, but he found plenty to do. In truth, his task was that of the hero of the Augean stables: the work had not been touched since he undertook it last. He determined to commence with the end of High Street which debouched on the village green, and he made his way down the street at a brisk walk, swinging his shovel, and whistling to keep

his spirits up. It was nearly time for the daily distribution to begin, and he was surprised to find the roadway opposite the stores deserted. Newæra had evidently learnt a lesson in good manners, and decided to do its shopping in an orderly manner in future.

As he neared the Green he was aware of an increasing number of men and women, all hurrying in the direction in which he himself was going. Absently speculating on their destination, he turned the corner near the Green, and at once the situation dawned on him. A vast crowd was collected in front of the great doors of the warehouse, silently waiting for the carts to emerge with the day's supplies. As he approached, the doors were thrown open, and a cart came forth. Instantly it was covered with a struggling mass of humanity. It did not pause, but proceeded leisurely in the direction of the stores, the carter walking at his horse's head. Before it had gone many yards it was empty, and the attention of the crowd was directed to the second cart, which followed it closely. Each of the five carts was cleared in the same manner, and as the last emerged, the warehouse doors swung to, and were instantly bolted from the inside.

Those who had secured prizes were soon hurrying to their homes, defending themselves as well as they could from groups of men and women who endeavoured to snatch at what they carried. But the day's supplies were meagre; they had been limited according to the decision of Parliament, and a large part of the crowd was empty handed. Evidently there would be no opportunity of purchasing supplies from Forbes and Wilson, who had indeed been waiting for hours before the warehouse, but had failed to secure more than would suffice for their own consumption. The pinch of hunger had been felt the day before, and the bearing of the crowd was ominous. For a time it waited about in uncertainty, as if expectant of some further distribution. The people divided into groups, and angrily discussed the situation. Soon significant glances were thrown towards the warehouse. The food it contained

was the people's property. By what right were the people being shut out from their property? Were they to go hungry at the dictate of their own representatives—their own servants—whose duty it was to feed them? No, a thousand times no! There were loud knocks on the warehouse doors; knocks became blows, but they were blows from unarmed hands, and the doors were strong. A hundred eyes searched round for tools. A sturdy fellow snatched Frank's shovel from his hands, and hurried with it through the crowd, brandishing it as he ran. So intent was the crowd on its immediate purpose, that scarcely anyone noticed the swift approach of a body of men, advancing at the double across the Green from the town hall. All but one were armed. The Government of Newæra had provided no military accoutrements, but in the town hall there were chairs and stools, and the legs of these articles of furniture can be detached by resolute men. Grimshaw's little army of 200 men (for Grimshaw himself was leading) advanced in a solid body, and cleaving a way through the crowd, which drew back in alarmed surprise at the sudden onslaught, took up a position four deep across the front of the warehouse, and stood facing the crowd. Clearly there was nothing to be done. Resistance was useless. A chair leg is not the most deadly of weapons, but, handled by a resolute man with right on his side, it is not to be lightly encountered. The danger had been foreseen and averted, and the crowd slowly melted away with angry mutterings.

Frank had been a passive spectator of these proceedings. The crisis being passed, he turned his thoughts to the task before him. He went in search of his shovel, which was handed to him by one of the small body of men who had been left to guard the warehouse in case of a renewed attack. As he bent his back to the work, scraping and sweeping a stretch of the asphalt road and collecting the dirt in little heaps at each side, two thoughts occupied his mind. He thought of his sister in her uncongenial surroundings, engaged in menial work to which she was little accustomed, and he thought of his dinner and hers. How

was it to be procured? There was very little food left in the house. The stores were closed. No supplies had gone to the restaurant. Forbes and Wilson had none. Should he call for Blanche at dinner-time, take her to the fields near by, and make an *al fresco* meal of raw corn, and potatoes dug from the earth and roasted at a brushwood fire, as many of his neighbours had done the previous day? As he turned this important question in his mind, a man passed him carrying a cheese. Here was his opportunity. He hurried after the man and accosted him, asking to be allowed to buy sufficient for the day's needs. The man was quite good natured, and gave him a small piece as an act of neighbourliness, but declined to sell any. Money was of no use to him; he had plenty, but as there was nothing to buy, it was useless. What he wanted was bread, or at any rate flour, and other foodstuffs if possible. He hoped to be able to barter his cheese for as much as would keep him supplied for the rest of the week. He was taking it to the Green, with the idea that he might meet there someone who was willing to do a deal with him. He set it down on the grass, and standing by it explained the situation to the passers-by, who looked at him with curiosity. The news soon spread in the village, and a succession of men and women appeared, bearing provisions of various kinds. A brisk trade was soon in progress. The cheese was cut up into fair-sized pieces, which were readily taken in exchange for small quantities of tea, rice, flour, a tin of fruit, and another of sardines. Similar exchanges were going on all round the knot of traders. They were soon surrounded by a crowd of persons anxious to buy, but with nothing but money to offer. All such offers were at first refused, but gradually, as the fortunate possessors of the food supplies succeeded in satisfying their various wants by barter, they became more willing to take money in exchange for the surplus of their original supplies. Prices were extraordinarily high. For 10s. Frank succeeded in purchasing about a pound of cheese and a few biscuits, enough, at any rate, to keep himself and Blanche from starvation that day.

Simple Ab was early on the scene. He had been among the crowd at the warehouse door, and had triumphantly carried off the bulkiest parcel on the first cart. Not till he was safely in his home, with the door shut and bolted, did he venture to explore its contents, and great was his tribulation when he discovered himself the possessor of four dozen Newæra pattern ladies' hats. When news reached him of the market on the Green, he hurried thither and displayed his treasures on the grass. They were marked 8s. each, a price which, as he explained to all who would listen, represented the amount of Simple Abstract Necessary Social Human Labour expended in their manufacture. But Newæra had not come to the Green in quest of ladies' hats. There was no demand. After much persuasion, he succeeded in selling half a dozen for 2*d.* each. The rest remained unsold, and were kicked about the grass—all but one, with which the crestfallen orator returned to meet his spouse. He carried it carefully in both hands, for it was filled with flour.

At dinner-time Frank called at the restaurant for his sister, but it was closed, as were most of the works and all the stores. There was nothing to sell, and Newæra was not in the humour for work after that morning's occurrences. Arrived at home, he found that his anxiety for Blanche's dinner had been needless. The house was empty, but there was a note from Blanche, saying that she had found no work at the restaurant, and had gone into the country. He would find food in the cupboard. He found a good supply there, much to his surprise. On going back to work in the afternoon, he found his superintendent with a gang of men under him. They had taken up his work where he had left it in the morning, and were making good progress. Frank received a sharp reprimand from his superintendent (an official whom he had himself placed on one of the town hall committees) for being ten minutes late. He determined to keep better time in future.

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The "hunger week" wore slowly to its close. Each morning after the frustrated attack on the warehouse the distribution of supplies took place. A guard was drawn up to protect the warehouse, but no attempt was made to escort the provision carts to their nominal destination. They were pounced upon as soon as they emerged, and emptied of their contents, which were immediately taken to the Green. There they were exchanged, principally by barter. When their possessors had secured enough of each commodity for their individual needs, the surplus was sold at famine prices to those who had money. There was a rumour that Parliament had decided to resume money payments, and there was less reluctance to take payments in coin, which had been at a discount so long as there was no prospect of its coming again into general use. Parliament had been sitting each day with closed doors, and there was much speculation as to the course it might decide to pursue. It was generally felt that a radical change of procedure was necessary. Little work was being done, though the factories were opened one by one as the Employment Committee proceeded with its work of appointing superintendents, and allocating work to the private members of the colony.

Saturday dawned with a leaden sky, and by 10 o'clock the rain had begun to fall in torrents. The whole week had been unbearably hot and sultry, and the rain was felt to be a relief.

In the evening the Ledingham household all met together for the first time that week. Each day Walter had been at the town hall from early morning until late at night. There had been a good deal of speculation as to the means of subsistence of the town hall officials, none of whom had taken part in the morning scrambles. Some rather ugly rumours had got abroad, and no reference had been made in Walter's presence to what was felt to be a delicate subject. Nor had the proceedings of Parliament been alluded to. All were burning to hear what decision had been arrived at, but by tacit consent it was left to Walter to make his disclosures at his own time. To tell the truth, a certain constraint had

fallen on the family on Walter's entrance, a constraint that was felt by himself no less than by his housemates. They were ordinary workers: he was to some extent the arbiter of their destinies.

After tea, he produced a copy of the *Newæra Record*, and handed it to Frank without a word. Frank glanced down the page, and then read aloud:—

“The present week has been one of the most eventful in the history of Newæra. In our last issue we noted with approval the wise decision of our Parliament to abolish the system of distribution by means of the Newæra coinage, and boldly to apply the fundamental socialist principle enunciated in the motto, ‘To each according to his needs,’ by instituting the free distribution to our workers of the commodities they have themselves produced. The new system has worked well. There have, it is true, been trifling hitches, owing to the newness of the machinery of distribution, but on the whole we may say that the decision of our administrators has been justified in the result. On Monday the distribution took place at the stores, but it was subsequently found more convenient to allow it to take place in the open space beside the village green. A party of gentlemen from the town hall watched with amused interest the handing of the various provisions from the carts. It was perhaps a mistake to make up the goods in parcels too large for the needs of the individual workers, as this involved a certain amount of exchange after the actual distribution had taken place, but it was carried through with the admirable good humour which is so characteristic of a community freed from the iron heel of the capitalist and the grinding force of competition.

“It appears that there is a slight and temporary shortage of supplies, so it has been decided to return for the next week, or until the harvest is safely garnered, to the former system of wages payments. We are authorized to announce that the rates will, until further notice, be as follows:—£3 per week for single workers, £3 5s. for married men, with an allowance of 2s. 6d. per week for each child under sixteen. We are sure the colonists will appreciate the

generous advance which Parliament has been able to make over the rates which obtained under the old administration. The first payment of wages will take place on Saturday next at the town hall, and workers will please note that it will be necessary to bring with them their new employment cards, together with wages notes signed by their respective superintendents.

“Our administrators have worked exceedingly hard since their election—indeed, we think it necessary to warn them against overtaxing their strength, and this warning should be taken to heart, not only by the Members of Parliament, but also by all those who are engaged in administrative work at the town hall. Newæra looks with confidence to the ultimate results of their efforts, but does not expect to see them at once in full fruition.

“There is indeed much to be done. We wish to say nothing in disparagement of the administration which is now superseded. Our late Dictator is a man whose genial character is generally esteemed. If the results of his Dictatorship have not been in all respects satisfactory, we would ask our readers to bear in mind that the administration of a great community like this is too great a task to be entrusted to a single individual, however excellent his intentions. Newæra will in future be administered by the Whole People, the collective wisdom of the Commonwealth being brought to bear on every problem, through the agency of Newæra’s elected representatives.

“It is indeed a fact of singularly happy portent that almost the first act of our Parliament was to pass a kind of Self-denying Ordinance, whereby the Members renounce for themselves and for their collaborators at the town hall all claim to their legitimate share of the produce issued daily from the warehouse. We have mentioned above that there is a merely temporary shortage in the stock of some commodities, and this has made it necessary to fix a limit to the amount distributed each day. Our administrators have earned the gratitude of Newæra by declining to participate in this distribution.

"It is expected that by next week the excitement due to the elections will have subsided, and that Newæra will have settled down to work again: no doubt an extra force of workers will be required to gather in the harvest.

"One decision of our Parliament will be hailed with satisfaction by every Newæran. It was resolved that a small but permanent body of police should be enrolled, and we understand that this measure has now been carried into execution. It will certainly lend an added sense of security to our social life.

"The secretary of the Amusement Committee asks us to announce that arrangements are being made for a band to play every evening on the Green. Musical volunteers are invited to communicate with the secretary at the town hall.

"A ball will be held in the public hall on Monday night, commencing at 7 o'clock. Admission is, of course, perfectly free, and all are invited. As the catering department is temporarily short handed, guests are invited to bring their own refreshments."

Frank laid the paper on the table and whistled. Walter was busy cleaning out his pipe. Joe Deacon smoked in silence, and Blanche was engaged with her own thoughts.

"Well, Walter," said Frank at last, "what do you think of it? I presume there has been a change in the editorial chair of the *Record*?"

"Not exactly that," said Walter. "You no doubt heard that the editor was elected to Parliament; he is still retaining the post, but a sub-editor has been appointed to relieve him of some of the work and to take over the management of the printing works."

"I see," said Frank. "That accounts for several things. And what do you think of it on the whole? Would you be disposed to call it a pack of lies, or,——?"

"No, no, I shouldn't say that. The language is a little flowery, no doubt, but the information is correct on the whole. Of course we have to bear in mind that the *Record* goes to London, and is eagerly read and commented on by

our enemies as well as our friends. It would not be good policy to wash our dirty linen in public."

"No doubt that is true. But there is one thing I do not understand; can you explain that mysterious paragraph about the 'Self-denying Ordinance'? Have you town hall people decided to live on the breath of the lily, or on the exhalations of your own virtues—or what?"

Walter laughed a little uneasily. "No, not exactly that. I think we have had a fairly good tea, haven't we? Did you inquire where it came from?"

"I have noticed that we have been a good deal better off than most of our neighbours in the matter of food, and I have wondered how it was managed. Where did it come from?"

"It is very simple. I ordered it from the warehouse."

"From the warehouse? Is this the Self-denying Ordinance?"

"It is the arrangement we came to. There is no need to apply that absurd name to it."

"And did you pay for it?"

"No, of course not, while the free distribution was in force. In future I shall pay for what I order—at store prices."

"I see. Then you and your colleagues and assistants are to order whatever you want direct from the warehouse, while we ordinary workers are to fight for our daily supply of food that is not enough to go round. Is that right, Walter?"

"I don't see why you should put it so baldly, not to say offensively. What this colony wants is organization. We have got the job of organizing it—not a very attractive job either. It would not be in the interest of the community to have its organizers and administrators spending their time in the shops, waiting to be served; and we must live, you know. You needn't grumble, at any rate, seeing that you share whatever I order."

Frank did not reply. His face showed deep dissatisfaction.

"What I can't understand is this," Blanche broke in.

"We are fearfully short of food, as everybody knows, yet

you have chosen this particular moment to raise wages all round from £2 to £3 a week. What is the meaning of it?"

"That arrangement was made for the purpose of equalizing wages a little more. Under the old scheme, a man with a wife and a lot of children got so very much more than a single worker, that there was constant jealousy. So we have halved the allowance for wives and children, but we thought it best to raise the rate, so that very few people would get less than before, and a great many will get more. So I hope all will be satisfied."

"Yes, but how about the limit on the supplies? There will be more money, and everybody likes that; but will there be more food to buy with it?"

"No, I am sorry to say we have had to reduce the amount to be given out each day. You see, the warehouse is almost empty."

"Well, it is all very puzzling," said Blanche with a sigh. "I never could understand finance, or economics, or whatever you call it."

"I have no doubt the new arrangement will work out as well as possible under the circumstances," Walter replied, as he took up his hat to go out. "I will order the main supplies from the warehouse, so long as they last, but if you want anything else I advise you to get it from Jack Forbes, and go early."

CHAPTER VI.

THE COUNCIL CHAMBER.

ABOUT a month had elapsed since the "hunger week" of free food distribution. The weeks which followed had been little less hungry. The harvest had indeed been gathered in; a party of officials from the town hall took a large gang of workers into the fields on the Monday after free food week, but there a disappointment awaited them. The cattle had broken into two of the best fields, and wrought havoc with the corn. The glorious weather of free food week had been allowed to pass, all the workers being in the village. The Saturday and Sunday were days of torrential rain, and when the workers came to cut the corn, they found it beaten down and sodden, eaten by cattle and birds, choked with weeds, and trampled by the picnic parties of the summer. It was a sorry harvest, and it was evident that Newæra could not depend on it for many months' food supply. A small amount was given out each day and used as frumenty, as it was found impossible to grind it. The mainstay of Newæra was the potato, of which there was a fair supply. The food was at first sent from the warehouse to the stores, but Forbes, Wilson, and half-a-dozen other merchants with their helpers, invariably succeeded in buying up the whole supply before the workers could get served, and soon the pretence of sending the food to the stores was given up. The merchants bought the whole supply direct from the warehouse, and sold it at enormous prices. This arrangement had one great advantage: every worker had money, and could buy sufficient food to support life, though even the high wages now paid did not avail to purchase more than a bare subsistence.

Two circumstances had indeed occurred to relieve the

scarcity. Parliament had decided to give up the strict vegetarian policy which had hitherto been in force. There were a fair number of sheep and cattle on the island, and it had been intended to use them merely for the supply of wool and milk, their hides being secured when they died. In view of the shortage of other provisions, it was decided to use the animals for food, and a few were killed each week. The carcasses were bought, and the meat distributed at a huge profit, by merchants.

The second circumstance was the receipt of a large legacy by one of the workers, a man named Williams. The colony was in urgent need of some supplies, which could only be obtained from the mainland, and then only in return for exports, which unfortunately were not available on account of the complete disorganization of the manufacturing departments. Strenuous efforts were made to induce Williams to give or lend his fortune to the colony. Interest as high as 20 per cent. was offered, but 20 per cent. in aluminium Newæra sovereigns did not appeal to Williams. Finally he agreed to part with £5,000 in return for about half the island. The land was to become his absolute property, the transfer being arranged through Frank's solicitors, and he undertook to farm it on his own account, hiring labourers from Newæra or from the mainland as he chose. He probably considered that Newæra would be a good market for farm produce. The purchase-money came as a most welcome windfall to Newæra, but clearly it would not go far towards keeping the colonists through the winter, and there was much debate, both in Parliament and among the workers, as to the best means of supplying the deficiency. The policy of "back to the land" was strongly urged by a section of the colonists, who were inclined to blame the factory system for the whole of their misfortunes. But it was pointed out in reply that a very large number of workers had spent the summer on the land, with disastrous results, and that an industrious worker could buy more corn with the cotton or iron goods he produced in the factory than he could raise by tilling the soil for the same length of time. Evidently, then,

the correct policy was to get the factories working as quickly as possible to produce manufactured goods and export them in exchange for food. The town hall was not long in putting this policy in operation; the working hours were increased to ten per day, superintendents were chosen from among the town hall officials, and placed in charge of the various factories, and soon the village assumed an appearance of bustling activity.

There had been a change in the Ledingham household. A growing sense of estrangement had crept in between Walter and the other members of the family. Acute differences of opinion had arisen between him and Frank on the subject of some of the proceedings of the new Government, culminating in a downright quarrel, and the departure of Walter. He had taken up his quarters with several of his parliamentary colleagues in St. Michael's Hall, which lay about half a mile from the village, and had been closed since the inauguration of the colony. Miss Evans was no longer assisting Blanche; she had been allotted other work.

Blanche had found her work at the restaurant hard and uninteresting, but not intolerable. She was rather a favourite with her superintendent, and this made her lot less unpleasant than it might have been. Indeed, but for occasional unwelcome attentions from some of the customers, she had little to complain of in connection with her work, menial though it was. But long hours, poor and insufficient food, and excessive fatigue consequent on her endeavour to keep the home bright and clean after her work at the restaurant was over, had told their tale. She had not entirely lost her good looks, but her face was drawn and thin, and there was very little of that smartness of appearance which used to characterize her. There was little time to spend on appearances, and no money to spend on clothes in Newæra.

It was with a sense of relief that she put away the last heavy pile of plates and stepped into the fresh air at closing time. The village band was playing in the distance, and all the trees were in the glory of their autumn foliage as she

stepped briskly down the High Street. It was her custom to meet Frank in the village after their work was over, and take a short walk along the cliffs with him before turning in for the evening. To-day he had told her he would be cleaning out a sewer near the town hall, and would wait for her under the trees on the Green. She was disappointed not to find him there, and after sitting on the grass awhile in the hope that he would join her, she concluded that he must have gone to meet her and missed her in the village. She therefore returned home, and on entering the sitting-room was surprised to find a stranger seated in any easy chair smoking a cigarette. He was a youngish man with sandy hair, a pale, flabby face and light eyelashes, whom she remembered to have seen several times lately at the restaurant. She had heard that he was in Parliament, but otherwise she knew nothing of him except that she had always felt an instinctive desire to get out of the room whenever she had found his eyes fixed on her.

"Good evening," she said, not very cordially, and standing only just inside the door. "I suppose you wish to see my brother? I expect him in any minute."

"Well, no Miss —Blanche is the name, is it not? No, Miss Blanche, I did not come to see your brother; in fact, I should be very much surprised to see him here. I think it very unlikely that he will be here this evening."

"Frank not here this evening? Please tell me what you mean." Blanche fell back a step and leaned against the wall, breathing quickly.

"I am very sorry, Miss Blanche, to have to tell you the rather unpleasant news. I felt sure you would have heard. Your brother seems to have been getting into trouble—some trifle, no doubt—I don't know the exact particulars. I think an assault was mentioned, and some person named—Deacon, I think it was. Some little affair of rivalry, I expect; you know the saying, '*Cherchez la femme*.'"

"But—please tell me what has happened: has Frank been attacked? is he hurt, or ——?"

"Oh, no; set your mind at rest. Your brother is all right,

—but he was arrested this afternoon in connection with the little affair I mentioned.”

“Frank arrested for assaulting Sam Deacon? Impossible! That was a month ago, and if ever a man was justified——”

“Pardon me, Miss Blanche, I would like to give you a word of warning; you know a wife cannot be compelled to give evidence against her husband, but a sister—that is different: I would not say too much about it, for your brother’s sake.”

Blanche was not listening. She was wildly thinking what steps she ought to take. To whom could she appeal for advice and help, and why was this man here?

“Where is my brother? You say they have arrested him: I must go and find him at once, and in the meantime——” Blanche hesitated—“I thank you for bringing me the news. Have you anything else to tell me, or—can I do anything for you?”

“Well, now, since you mention it, I think I would like a cup of tea, if you would be so good. We have had a heavy day at the House, and if you will just sit down quietly, we can talk matters over, and discuss what is best to be done while we are having tea.”

Blanche stared at him in amazement: her anger was rapidly rising.

“I don’t know what you mean,” she said. “I have thanked you for telling me of Frank’s arrest, and now, if you have nothing more to say, please leave me.”

“Oh, come, Miss Blanche, be a sensible girl, and don’t order a fellow out of his house and home in that uncereemonious fashion. Your brother is all right, and you can’t see him. He is locked up in No. 3 church, and the place is shut.”

Blanche could contain herself no longer. “Why am I to be subjected to this insolence?” she cried. “Is it not enough that my brother is persecuted for acting as any gentleman would, but I must submit to your intrusion in my house, and your most ungentlemanly refusal to leave when I demand it? Are you taking advantage of the fact that I am not strong enough to turn you out?”

"I am awfully sorry that you should be so upset, Miss Blanche, but I assure you, you are speaking under quite a wrong impression. This is not your house. This house belongs to Newæra, and Newæra has decided, through its chosen representatives, that I am to live here. There was a vacancy here; I was homeless, and I am to fill the vacancy. It is all quite simple, and I am sure both you and I will find it a very pleasant arrangement. Allow me to help you off with your jacket."

Blanche quickly placed a chair between herself and her visitor, and stood defiantly facing him.

"I don't believe a word of what you say. You have no authority for this intrusion, and——"

"Pardon me, Miss Blanche, you are too hasty. I have the best authority for taking my present position, and, since you doubt my word, here it is." He took from his pocket a printed form with a few written words, and handed it to Blanche. She took it and read:—

"NEWÆRA HOUSING DEPARTMENT.

"Dwelling No. 27, Liberty Street.

"Mr. Charles White, M.P., Bachelor, is to live at above address.

"Signed,

"WALTER GRIMSHAW.

"Chairman of Housing Committee."

"So this is Mr. Grimshaw's doing, is it?" said Blanche indignantly. "Very well, we shall see whether Mr. Grimshaw is as powerful as he thinks."

"Oh, come, Miss Blanche, be a reasonable girl. Mr. Grimshaw has nothing to do with it, except that he signed the order as chairman. The fact is, I applied for quarters here, and can't you guess why? Do you think I have not seen you soiling your hands with menial work? Do you think I have not wished to save you—to help you—to use my power as a Member ——"

Blanche heard no more. She left the room and shut the door. As she stepped into the street she met Joe Deacon, to

her great joy. She quickly explained the situation and implored his help. He was for going in at once and pitching out the intruder, neck and heels, but Blanche begged him to remember what had befallen Frank. The Government was all-powerful, and she had only him to rely on. Joe at once saw the un wisdom of using violence, but was puzzled to suggest an alternative course. Blanche quickly unfolded the plan she had decided on for the immediate future. She had several times visited the old woman whose acquaintance she and Frank had made in the country, and felt sure she would help her. She would go out there at once, and beg a lodging until the intruder was got rid of or her brother released. Joe approved of this plan, but would not hear of Blanche making the expedition alone, as she proposed. He insisted on accompanying her. "It is getting late, Miss Blanche, and the roads are not safe: if you only knew——"

"I know very well what you mean, but I am not afraid—they won't dare to molest me."

Joe was obdurate, and Blanche consented to his accompanying her part of the way at any rate. She asked him to go in and engage the visitor in conversation for a few minutes while she got together some things, and slipped out: when she was clear of the house, Joe was to join her. This plan was carried out, and the two set out for their four-mile walk.

Joe had heard of Frank's arrest, and had been round to the town hall to make inquiries, but he had been unable to see the prisoner, or to learn any particulars, except that Frank was locked up in No. 3 church, and was to be tried on the morrow for having assaulted Sam, "as he very well deserved," he added warmly.

"Don't you think we could get out of this horrible place?" said Blanche, as they turned from the High Street into the quiet country lane. "I think all the people here are turning into wild beasts."

"It has been done," Joe replied quietly; "but I am afraid it would be difficult now. Simple Ab got on board the steamer last week among a lot of cattle that were being driven on board, and he got clear away, but since then the

quay has been guarded by a strong body of police whenever the boat is in, and it would be very difficult to get past them. There would be plenty ready to try it if it were not so hopeless."

"I cannot understand how it is that socialists allow themselves to be made into policemen to oppress their fellows; but I suppose they are compelled to do police work, whether they like it or not, as I am compelled to wash dishes."

Joe gave a short laugh. "No," he said, "no compulsion is required; quite the contrary. Why, only the other day a rumour got abroad that they were enrolling more police at the town hall. A dozen of the men in the mechanics' shop threw down their tools, and insisted on going to volunteer. The superintendent told them that if they left their work they would go for good, but they decided to risk that, and they have been out ever since. There were no police being taken on. You see, a policeman is a civil servant, a town hall official, and he gets the usual privileges of buying at store prices, which comes to just the same thing as paying him five or six times the wage of us ordinary workers."

"And what became of the men who were discharged? They can't get work elsewhere. It was a shame to discharge them."

"I don't know what became of them, but they have plenty of company. Some of the superintendents act on the principle that if a man won't work—that is to say, work according to instructions and to the satisfaction of his superintendent—he must starve. They get the work done, except when they run short of materials, which is pretty often; but the workers are very bitter against them. Other superintendents are just as lax. Their workers know that they will get their wages just the same whether they do much or little, good or bad work, and for the most part they don't work at all. I have got one of the strict sort."

"I suppose there is no more inventing, then?"

"Oh, no; that has all been put a stop to."

"Did anything come of it?"

"Oh, yes," said Joe with a laugh; "a lot of inventions

came of it, and they were considered by the Committee at the town hall. Most of them were airships. One was to be 800 feet long and 400 feet in diameter, all of aluminium. It was to be the shape of an egg boiler, with a bulb at each end, so that both ends would keep up, being filled with gas."

"That seems rather a good idea."

"Well I don't know; the Committee thought so, but they decided to put off making it until we are a little more wealthy; it would cost more than Newæra is worth at present."

"Aren't any of them to be made, then?"

"Oh, yes; they have given orders for one to be made. It is an aeroplane, with a kind of windmill in front to drive the propeller."

"I suppose you didn't go in for inventing, Joe?"

"Well, yes; I did get out a little thing, a kind of steam valve, but the Committee didn't think anything of it. I think it might be a good thing, and I have sent it to the manager of the Vulcan Works, who is a friend of mine. He is going to put it on the market."

Their path now lay along the top of the cliff; it was narrow, and they had to walk in single file. Then they struck across the fields, and Blanche reopened the conversation.

"You were speaking of Simple Ab's escape just now. Did you say the cattle were being landed?"

"No, they were being driven into the boat."

"But surely the Government is not sending food away while we are all half-starved?"

"No, not the Government; they belonged to private individuals. I think Forbes has sent a good many across, and sheep too, as well as manufactured articles."

"But I don't understand; why is he sending them away, when they are wanted here so badly?"

"It puzzled me a good deal at first, but I made inquiries, and so far as I can make out it is like this: Forbes, as you know, is buying from the warehouse, and selling at a big

profit. He was very much set up at first, because he found himself rapidly becoming a rich man. But after a time it occurred to him that even if he had a room full of aluminium sovereigns he would not be much better off. There is not much here to buy except food, of which he has plenty, and if he wanted to order a motor car from the mainland, or to lay by something for the future, in case Newæra came to an end, his money would only be worth scrap-metal price. His problem was to convert his Newæra money into English money, or English securities, or into things that he could only buy in England, and his only way of doing this was to buy something here, and send it across to be sold in England. He was sure of being able to sell sheep and cattle, so he has been exporting them. I suppose it is what people used to try to frighten us with—investing capital abroad.”

“I think the Government ought to put a stop to it,” said Blanche, “but they seem utterly incompetent. People had plenty of fault to find with Frank’s Dictatorship, but I am sure things are infinitely worse now.”

“I agree with you that it ought to be stopped, but I don’t think it would be easy, and I think it very unlikely that this Parliament will attempt it.”

“Why can’t they put a stop to all this private trading—forbid anyone to buy and sell at a profit?”

“I am not sure whether they could do it, but I see clearly why they don’t attempt it. In the first place, you must understand that when you buy from Jack Forbes you are really doing business with Jack Forbes and Company. The company does not appear on the sign-board, but it has a very real existence, and it is generally to be found at the town hall. A lot of the members and officials are interested in it, and they are most of them doing some exporting on their own account. They are not likely to put an end to a system which is very profitable to themselves. Even if they were willing to put it down it would not be easy. Free distribution has been tried: you know the result. A small number of people got the whole of the supplies, and the rest had to go into the fields and grub

up potatoes. Selling at store prices was very little better. You had to go early and wait for hours to be served, and even then you often found everything was sold before your turn came."

"But why couldn't the prices be raised, so that those who came first could not afford to buy up the whole of the food?"

"Well, of course, you know why that is not likely to be popular at the town hall. The officials are buying at lower prices than the rest of us, and that is just the same as if they had much higher wages. But even if they did raise the store prices, they would have to vary them constantly according to the supply. They would never be just right, and there would be plenty of people taking care that they were not just right. I can give you an instance of what I mean. You know the soap works has been stopped this last fortnight?"

"Yes, I have seen the workers hanging about, but I didn't know why."

"They had another breakdown in their machinery. I have been working on the repairs, and I have found out one or two interesting facts. In the first place, the breakdown was caused intentionally. Whether it was brought about by some of the workers who wanted a holiday at full pay, or by instructions from elsewhere, I don't know. Somebody wanted a breakdown, and there was a breakdown. The other interesting fact is this: our superintendent is doing all he can to delay the repairs. For days together nothing is done. Why? Because a gang at the town hall has bought up all the soap. They are waiting until every bit that has been distributed has been used. Then they will begin to sell it a little at a time, through Forbes most likely, at enormous prices. They can carry on their little game just as long as the soap works remain shut."

"Oh, dear!" sighed Blanche; "it seems as if everything went wrong here, and everybody seems to be trying to make things go wrong. Why is it? Surely they must all want the colony to be a success?"

"I suppose they do in a general way, but I fancy the weak point of the present arrangement is this: there is not a man or woman in Newæra who does not stand to gain more by making things go wrong than by making them go right. The chaps at the soap works wreck their machinery. They are rewarded with a fortnight's pay for nothing. I work extra hard one week. I get no more for it. Prices are no lower. I am no better off. My mate has a good easy time, and only does half as much as I do. He makes thirty articles a week against my sixty. Result, he gets 2s. for each article, while I only get a shilling for each that I make. He is living on my labour, and the lazier he is, the more he gets of the product of my labour. The only way I can get even with him is by being lazy too. The superintendent is keeping us both back this week, so that he can get his share of the plunder from the soap ring. Next week he may be driving us like slaves, not for the good of the colony, but so that he can get something made that he can buy with his soap money, and send it out of the island. If he simply worked for the good of the colony, he would be a lot worse off."

"It all seems very hopeless," said Blanche, despondently. "I didn't know socialists were such a lot of selfish, wrong-headed people."

"They are not more selfish or wrongheaded than anybody else—probably less so, or were before they came here; but a man has to be a good deal better than most human beings if he can live in a community that is practically offering rewards for doing wrong and punishments for doing right, and not be the worse for it. I reckon to be as fond of my work as most people, but I don't see breaking my back for a lot of folks who are idling round me, and I am not going to do it either. If idling's the word, then I'll idle with the rest of them. If Newæra is going bankrupt, my work won't prevent it."

"I don't wonder you look at it in that way; but surely something can be done to set things right. Frank will break his heart if the whole thing is a failure."

"I very much doubt whether things can be set right, Miss Blanche. Only one thing I can suggest. We ought to have a lot of workers in Parliament. They ought to be pledged not to accept any of the town hall privileges, and they should represent the interests of the workers. That would be a step in the right direction, but whether they could set things on a sound footing against the opposition of the whole official class—that is another matter."

"Well, we shall be having another election soon. Won't you stand for Parliament, and see what you can do?"

"I have thought of that, and I suppose I would stand if the workers really wished it, but I had much rather keep out of it. Parliament work is not my line, and I really don't see my way to many reforms, except by way of opposing jobbery and corruption."

They had now reached their destination. Blanche was kindly greeted by her friend at the farm, who was much surprised to see her at that hour, and most kind and sympathetic when she learned the reason of her unexpected visit. All the bedrooms were occupied, but she willingly set about preparing an extempore bed in the sitting-room, and Joe had an easy mind when he set out for his long tramp back to the village, after partaking of a hastily-prepared meal.

Blanche was not sparing in her thanks to her kind hostess when she set out for the village next morning. She received a cordial invitation to return that night, and, indeed, to make the farm her home until her brother should be released or the intruder ejected from the house in Liberty Street. She accepted the invitation provisionally. Much would depend on the events of that day, and she could not at present say what her arrangements would be; but she promised in any case to visit the farm on the earliest opportunity, and acquaint her friend with the turn of events.

It was a sharp autumn morning, and the landscape was seen dimly through a thin veil of mist. In ordinary circumstances she would have thoroughly enjoyed the brisk walk in the morning air, but to-day her mind was filled with the

events that lay behind and before her, and she gave little attention to her surroundings. About the unwelcome visitor in Liberty Street she troubled herself little on her own account. She had found a means of escape, and was determined not to re-enter the house until he had left it. She did indeed feel some anxiety as to what might have happened on Joe's return. He was of a quiet, peaceable disposition, but she knew he was capable of being roused to fierce indignation and anger, and she could well imagine a stormy encounter when Joe returned from escorting her out of reach of her persecutor. She was chiefly concerned with Frank's fate, and the indignity that had been put upon him as a result of his loyal action on her behalf; and always in the background was the gloom that had spread itself over her recent life—the sordid work at the restaurant; the ill-kept home, which she had neither time nor energy to put in order; and the sense of discontent, the privation, the unrestrained licence, corruption, and oppression of which she was reminded at every turn.

She had been on foot three-quarters of an hour, and was well within sight of the town hall tower when she became aware of a dark object lying on the road in front of her. The sight filled her with undefined alarm, which increased to horror as she approached the body of a man lying across the roadway with his face covered with blood. At first she thought he was dead, but, as she stooped over him, a faint groan escaped his lips and his eyelids quivered. His coat was torn, his cheek showed a long, swollen bruise, and the blood from a cut over one eye had disfigured his face. All around the surface of the road showed signs of a struggle, and his hat lay crushed a few yards away. Evidently he had met with violence, and was in sore need of help, but she felt herself totally inexperienced, and at a loss to know what she ought to do. She gently tried to rouse him, speaking to him repeatedly, but only eliciting another groan. Evidently he was badly injured, and beyond her power to help, so she placed a cushion of soft grass beneath his head, and set off at a run towards the village. It took her only a few minutes

to reach the Green, where she saw a policeman coming from the town hall. She rapidly told him what had occurred, then went on to the town hall for more help, while he ran to the warehouse for a hand-cart and a plank or shutter. She was soon on her way to the scene of the tragedy, accompanied by three policemen with the improvised stretcher. On their way they called at the doctor's house, but found he had just started for a day's fishing. His wife gave them a flask of brandy, and with this they hurried forward, and found the unfortunate man lying as Blanche had left him. One of the policemen immediately recognized him as the superintendent of the mechanics' shop. A few drops of brandy revived him slightly, and he was lifted on to the stretcher and wheeled towards his home. Blanche left the little party at the Green, but before doing so she asked one of the policemen his opinion as to the probable motive of the crime. "Was it a private quarrel or an organized attack?"

"I have little doubt on that point, miss. We have been expecting something of the kind to happen, and now it has begun we shall have our hands full. This is the work of the unemployed, though there may be others in it as well. Perhaps people will begin to believe us when we say more police are necessary. There have been plenty of threats lately."

Leaving him, Blanche took her way to No. 3 church, which had now been divided into a number of offices. About half of them were in use by the police department while one had been converted into a cell for prisoners. At the back of the building a room, which had been intended for the vestry, was now used as the mint. It had been crowded out of the town hall in the early days. Blanche entered the first office she came to, and was confronted with the police superintendent, who courteously but firmly refused her request to be allowed to see her brother. Strict orders had been given that he should be kept entirely secluded, but he was to be tried that morning by a committee of officials who were then being appointed, and no doubt she would be allowed to see him when his fate had been decided. Finding her

entreaties unavailing, she went on to the town hall, and, passing the doorkeeper without opposition, she passed along the corridor, with offices on either side, and soon found herself before the folding doors which gave access to the council chamber. She boldly opened the doors and entered, but was at once stopped by an attendant, who had been seated at a small desk just inside the room. He explained that admittance during the debates was absolutely prohibited. She began to expostulate and explain her mission, but he pushed her outside the doors, and, following her, listened to what she had to say. She demanded to be allowed to put her brother's case before the elected representatives of the colony, and to protest against the outrage that had been committed by the Housing Committee in forcing an insolent stranger into her home at the very moment when she was deprived of the protection of her brother. The attendant listened to her impassively, but explained that it was none of his business. The rule was that none but members should be admitted to the chamber without a special order, and he was only obeying instructions in excluding her.

At this juncture someone brushed past, and was about to enter the folding doors when Blanche caught sight of his face and put out her hand to detain him. Lord Bury—for it was he—turned sharply, and almost immediately recognized her. Blanche had not seen him since the day of the memorable ceremony in Liberty Street, and she was surprised by the change in his appearance. He was decidedly stouter, and his face had assumed the fair round contour and rubicund complexion that bear witness to good living. He was clad in a suit of light tweed, with a pronounced check. Across his capacious person was stretched a massive cable chain of gold, and from beneath the lapel of his coat peeped forth the corner of a large blue bow, somewhat soiled, but clearly recognizable as the discarded decoration of Blanche's summer hat.

Lord Bury greeted Blanche effusively, while the attendant fell back respectfully, evidently surprised that this rather

forlorn-looking, ill-clad damsel should claim acquaintance with the nobleman without receiving a rebuff.

Lord Bury looked grave when Blanche had unfolded her tale and proffered her request. For a private person to address the assembly was an unheard-of thing. He did not think it would be allowed, but he would be most happy to exercise his privilege as a Member by escorting her into the chamber. She could there listen to what was going on, and wait for her opportunity while he consulted the President as to the possibility of her being allowed to speak. Blanche soon found herself seated in an obscure corner of the council chamber, eagerly taking in the scene before her.

The Parliament of Newæra was not at first sight an impressive body. Blanche had at first some difficulty in making out the arrangement of the chamber on account of the dense clouds of tobacco smoke that filled the air. As her eyes became accustomed to the gloom she distinguished the President, Walter Grimshaw, sitting alert and watchful at the table at the head of the room. A Member on either side of him, at the same table, was engaged with writing materials. About twenty-five Members were present, and were for the most part seated on benches ranged down two sides of the room. At the end opposite the President's table and near Blanche's seat, was a long desk, at which clerks were seated. On a bench close beside her, two Members were stretched at full length, and one of them was snoring. On her left was a group of six or eight Members gathered round a low table. It was not at first apparent what was going on here, but from the clink of glasses, the rattle of money, and occasional ejaculations, Blanche concluded that a game of cards was in progress. A Member on the President's left was addressing the House, and Blanche soon gathered that the subject under discussion was—the Unemployed.

The speaker was pointing out that Newæra had to deal with two distinct classes of unemployed. There was the large and growing body of men and women who had been discharged from the various factories on the principle that

“if a man will not work he must starve.” This principle, he said, was correct in theory, but in practice it took the rather different form—“if a man will not work, he must beg or steal”—and this body of unemployed was becoming a menace to the peaceful colonists, so that it was not safe to go beyond the main streets at night, or to leave a house unguarded. The second class consisted of those who were unable to work owing to temporary dislocations of industry. He instanced the soap works, closed through a breakdown; the boot factory, idle for want of raw material; and, most important of all, the clothing factory, which used to employ a large number of workers, but which had been closed because there were stacks and stacks of clothes now made, but the colonists were not buying any clothes—they had to spend all their money on food. (A voice, “Over-production.”) Yes, he said, there was certainly a very serious amount of over-production. He pointed out that the present practice of paying full wages to workers who were unemployed through breakdowns, slackness of trade, and so on, was a constant inducement to the workers to produce intentional dislocations of industry, and that the presence of a large body of men and women, roaming about the village and the adjacent country without occupation, was causing considerable damage and inconvenience, and leading to certain irregularities which were likely to bring disgrace on the colony. Turning now to practical proposals, he suggested that a penal colony should be established for the unemployed of the first class; that the wages of the second class of unemployed should be reduced to one-quarter of the standard rate, and that steps should immediately be taken towards making an ornamental lake in the centre of the Green, for the purpose of finding work for those who were temporarily displaced.

As he took his seat amid some applause, a second Member sprang to his feet, and in vigorous language denounced the Hon. Member’s proposals as brutal and inhuman. He said it was a scandal that superintendents should have the power of discharging workers on the pretext that they were not working hard enough. As often as not, these discharges

were due to personal spite. That all workers who were unemployed through no fault of their own should certainly have full wages. As to finding them work, he saw no particular objection to the ornamental lake, but he pointed out that in the fields round the village ploughing was now being done; that one man with a plough and two horses could turn up a field in a week, whereas if the work were done by digging, it would find employment for a hundred men for a month or even two. He therefore advocated the abolition of ploughs, and the breaking up of the machinery in the clothing factory, and all the other factories as well. If all the work were done by hand, there would be plenty of employment for all. He thought, however, that the most serious cause of unemployment was the importation of goods from the mainland, and he suggested that a thumping big duty should be put on. That would put an end to all this dumping of wretched English stuff; everything they wanted would be produced in the colony; there would be work for all, and the import duties would make such an addition to their revenue as to place them at once in a position of affluence. Hon. Members would scarcely need to be reminded that the Englishman would pay the duty.

At this point Walter Sinclair got up, and in a somewhat sarcastic speech pointed out that the present need of Newæra was goods to use, and goods to exchange for other goods. That it made not the smallest difference to the prosperity of the colony whether a hundred men were engaged in digging out a lake, digging a field that one man could plough, or making goods by hand that could be made by machinery without their labour: in each case they would be consuming, but adding nothing to the production of useful articles; their labour would be wasted, and they might as well be doing nothing. He went on to say that it was absurd to talk of over-production of wealth when everybody in the colony was as poor as a church mouse—indeed, he did not believe such a thing as over-production had ever existed in the history of the world. What was happening was this: about a third of the workers were at the town hall producing nothing; about

another third were out of work—also producing nothing ; and the remaining third had to produce enough to feed not only themselves, but the other two-thirds as well. They could just produce enough to feed them by working very hard, but not enough to clothe them as well, so of course the clothing factory had to be shut. He therefore concluded that the root of the whole trouble was the huge number of officials who were producing nothing, and he thought they would have to be set to productive work before the colony could expect to find its feet. As to the Hon. Member's suggestion of a duty to keep out imports, this was absolutely ridiculous. The imports consisted of food for the colonists : they were paid for by means of goods made by the colonists. If they were stopped, the colonists would starve, and the few who were still working would be thrown out of employment.

At this juncture, a policeman was seen in earnest conversation with the door-keeper. Presently one of the clerks was called into the conference, and this gentleman then passed up the floor of the chamber, and held a short conversation with the President. Mr. Grimshaw rose and rang his bell. "Gentlemen," he said, "I have a very serious announcement to make. It has just been reported to me that an esteemed comrade, Mr. Salter, who succeeded me as superintendent of the engineering works, has been found half murdered on the road outside the village. Mr. Salter recently had occasion to discharge a number of his men for refusing to work. There can be little doubt that he has been set upon and brutally illtreated by a gang of the unemployed.

"The outrage probably occurred yesterday, as he was missing from home last night. He was left for dead, and accidentally discovered about an hour ago. Greatly as we must all deplore this outrage, we cannot but feel that the announcement has come at an opportune moment, when we are engaged in discussing the best means of dealing with the ruffians who perpetrated it. Whatever decision is arrived at on this important point, there can, I think, be no doubt as to the necessity of taking immediate steps to ensure the safety of the colonists and particularly of those servants

of the community who are specially likely to become the victims of similar outrages. These offences are becoming alarmingly common. Only yesterday a person was arrested for making a murderous attack on a comrade, and many officials have complained of having been threatened with personal violence. In view of these facts, I propose that an additional force of fifty police be immediately raised, that these police be dressed in plain clothes, and permitted to continue to work at their present occupations. I also propose that all officials who consider themselves in danger, be authorized to carry arms."

Grimshaw's speech caused great excitement, even the card-players turning round from their table while it was being delivered. His practical proposals were received with applause. Member after Member got up and expressed his horror at the outrage, and his approval of the proposed precautions against further violence.

Walter Sinclair, in a short speech, deprecated the introduction of firearms into the colony. It would only lead to bloodshed, and probably be less effective than the adoption of less deadly weapons. At this Walter Grimshaw again rose, and explained that in using the word "arms," he had not thought of firearms. What was required was a weapon that would keep an attacker at a safe distance, and would be capable of inflicting pain without permanent injury. The ideal weapon for this purpose was the whip, not a long driving whip, but a short whip, with a handle, say, 1 foot long, and a 2-foot or 3-foot lash of leather and whipcord.

This suggestion was ultimately adopted, and it was further decided that the privilege of carrying arms should be confined to Members of Parliament, and persons specially authorized by them, including superintendents and others, who were engaged in the actual supervision of the workers, and therefore exposed to danger in case of insubordination.

Blanche had been so engrossed with what was passing before her, as almost to forget her own affairs. She had seen Lord Bury approach the President, and engage him in

conversation for some minutes, and from the glances that were thrown in her direction, she judged that her request was being discussed. Lord Bury did not return to her until the debate was nearly at an end, and then it was only to inform her regretfully that it would be quite impossible for her to address the House, but that she was advised to apply to the superintendent of the Housing Department. She accepted Lord Bury's offer to accompany her to interview this official, and he loyally supported her when she put her case. The superintendent was, however, inexorable. Mr. White was, for certain reasons, homeless. There was only a limited number of houses, and in No. 27, Liberty Street, there was a vacancy. As to Mr. Ledingham's absence, that was unfortunate, but if people would make murderous attacks on their comrades ——. His absence did not make any difference, as the absurd conventions of an effete civilization, did not apply in Newæra. Seeing that argument was useless, Blanche thanked Lord Bury for his assistance, and hurried to the police office in No. 3 church. There she learned that Frank had been found guilty and sentenced to one month's imprisonment. Orders had been given that his friends were not to be admitted to see him.

With a heavy heart Blanche went to the restaurant, where she first got something to eat, and then went to the kitchen to resume her work. She received a severe reprimand for absenting herself without leave, and was told that if it occurred again she would be discharged. She took little notice of this threat, and set herself doggedly to work. At closing time, Joe Deacon made his appearance, and on learning that she would spend the night at the farm, he insisted on escorting her. Her morning's experience made her less inclined to refuse his company. Her friends at the farm were glad to see her, and a bedroom was placed at her disposal.

Next morning her hostess roused her very early, with the news that a gentleman was asking to see her. Full of misgivings, she hastily dressed herself, and on entering the living-room, was overjoyed to see—Frank! His story was

soon told. Shortly after midnight he had been aroused in his cell by a peculiar noise at the door. It soon became evident that someone was trying to prise it open with some instrument inserted between the door and the jamb. Not knowing whether to expect a rescue, or foul play, he armed himself with a stool and waited in silence. Presently the door yielded, and a dozen men rushed in. They were utterly taken aback at seeing, by the light of the moon, a man standing in the centre of the room with a stool upraised ; but finding he was alone, they quickly surrounded him, wrenched the stool from his grasp and held him prisoner. Frank saw that resistance was useless, and quietly asked them what they would with him. Without replying, they demanded who he was, and what he was doing there. On his mentioning his name, and the fact that he was in custody, they immediately released him, and explained their errand. They were unemployed workers, and had broken into the building with the intention of robbing the mint. They had broken open the cell, believing that the money was stored there, and they offered to set Frank at liberty on condition that he would direct them to the plunder they were in search of. Frank declined to do this, but pointed out that he was quite powerless in their hands, and was not likely to raise an alarm, as that would certainly prevent his escape. The men seemed satisfied with this, and leaving two of their number to watch over Frank, they resumed their search. The store of money was soon discovered in an adjoining room, and the two guards rushed away to share the plunder, leaving Frank free. He had gone straight home, and had found Joe Deacon still up, he having only just returned from the farm. Joe had given Frank an account of what had passed since his arrest, and on his advice Frank had walked out at once to the farm, spent the remainder of the night in an outhouse, and gained admittance to the house as soon as he heard someone stirring.

It was arranged that Blanche should go to work as usual, and, if possible, ascertain what steps the authorities were taking with reference to Frank's escape. He, in the mean-

time, would remain in hiding at or near the farm; Blanche would return that night with Joe, and the three would concert their future plans, which would depend on the report from the village.

That day a loaf of bread was sold in Newæra for £50. About £5,000 in aluminium had been taken from the mint, and three of the gang went early to Forbes's shop and offered to buy up the whole of his stock. Forbes had already got wind of the robbery, and was far too good a business man to fail in grasping the situation. He refused to part with the whole of his stock, but for £1,000 he sold as much as the three men could carry away with them. His prices that day were such that a riot was threatened, but a large body of police appeared on the scene at the critical moment, and the situation was saved, though the attitude of the people was menacing in the extreme.

Little notice was taken of Frank's escape. The whole story of his arrest, of his dealings with Sam Deacon, and of the recent events at 27, Liberty Street, had spread like wildfire through the town. Frank had always been liked, and his popularity had been growing since the affairs of the colony had been taken out of his hands. He was now the popular hero, and the authorities were probably right in thinking that any further attempt to interfere with him would cause the colonists to rise *en masse*, with results that were not pleasant to contemplate. Frank therefore quietly resumed his scavenging without molestation. He and Blanche spent several nights at the farm. Mr. White found the domestic arrangements at Liberty Street very little to his liking, as Joe contrived never to enter the house except at night, and his housemate was left in sole possession, with liberty to cook his own meals and entertain himself as best he could. He soon tired of this arrangement, and found another billet, presumably in more congenial surroundings. Frank and Blanche returned to their own quarters, and the Ledingham household resumed its interrupted course of life.

CHAPTER VII.

THE WILL OF THE WHOLE PEOPLE.

THE second election was approaching, and Newæra looked forward to it as to a deliverance from bondage. The discontent was deep and bitter, but for the most part inarticulate. The workers saw that their labour was being exploited for the enrichment of a horde of officials whom they themselves had placed in power, and who were now eating up the substance of the community, living lives of luxury and debauchery, while the workers were starving, and bands of unemployed were roaming the streets, a terror to all who went abroad. There had been some attempted risings of the workers, but these had been put down with an iron hand. The man with the whip was everywhere—the whip had come to be the sign and symbol of office—but even he was less feared and hated than the body of men who were known as “Count Grimshaw’s eyes.” None knew who these men were, or how many—they were indistinguishable from the workers with whom they mixed in the workshop, in the restaurant, at the fireside; but woe to the man or woman who incurred their displeasure or brought on himself the suspicion of plotting against the Government. An incautious word was sufficient—spoken, it might be, to a fellow worker at the bench or to a chance acquaintance in the street. Count Grimshaw had heard, and Count Grimshaw did not forget. Count Grimshaw was the man in Newæra. Parliament met as usual; the Members quarrelled, fought, played, slept. Count Grimshaw acted, and when he struck, the blow was swift and unexpected—it might be imprisonment, discharge, degradation. But he did not always strike. Then the victim of his displeasure would

become aware, by many subtle signs, that he was under suspicion—that his every movement was being watched. From this tyranny Newæra was to free herself. The election was at hand, and the voice of the Whole People would speak.

There was little alteration in the material condition of Newæra. The exportation of food had been stopped. The Government had realized in time that a certain minimum of food must be supplied or work would cease, and the Government believed in work. Those who wished to send their savings abroad might buy manufactured goods, or even raw materials, and export them, but not food.

The condition of the unemployed was not so desperate as it had been. They received a small dole of money every week, with which they could buy food enough to support life. The Government had realized that if it was not given it would be taken. But a fair number of those who had been discharged were now no longer unemployed. Work was going on briskly at Williams's farm at the far end of the island. Williams required labour, and he paid good wages, better than could be earned by skilled men in Newæra. And he paid in English money, instead of in the hated aluminium coins which seemed to lose more and more of their purchasing power every day. Jack Forbes was always glad to sell his stores for English money, and an English shilling would buy as much as a Newæran half-sovereign.

Many of the former unemployed had been engaged in mysterious building operations at a spot about half a mile from the village. Forbes was often seen there directing operations, but none knew what was on foot, until one day it was announced that the Forbes bakehouse was in operation; that a man might, if he were lucky, work there under a foreman who carried no whip, and earn decent English wages that could be spent at Forbes's shop. Unfortunately there was not work for one-tenth of those who applied for it; but other buildings were going up.

Joe Deacon had reluctantly consented to stand for Parliament: the problem was to get him elected. He and Frank went

round together to the town hall, and asked to be allowed to speak with the Town Clerk. After some delay, they were ushered into the office of that dignitary.

"We wish to engage the public hall," said Frank, "for one or two nights this week or next. We intend to hold some meetings in connection with Mr. Deacon's candidature. If there is any charge——"

The Town Clerk laughed. "My dear Mr. Ledingham," he said, "you forget you are in Newæra. The public hall belongs to the people, and they do not pay for its use. What nights would you like?"

"I think Friday this week, and Tuesday next week," said Frank, agreeably surprised at the cordiality of his reception. Then he added as an afterthought, "If we could have it for Friday week as well, we should feel more secure of getting our man in; but, of course, if it is not at liberty——"

"We will soon see about that," said the Town Clerk, reaching down a book, and running his finger down the page. "Let me see; Friday, you said—ah! I see Lord Bury and Mr. Saxton, M.P., are down for that night. Tuesday is booked to the Count. Friday week—no, it is taken in the names of three of our Members. I am sorry, Mr. Ledingham, the hall is engaged on those three nights."

"Well, I don't know that it matters; one night is as good as another. If you will let me know what nights are at liberty, I will select one or two."

Again the finger travelled down the page, and finally came to a stop.

"I see we are at liberty on Monday the 22nd and Tuesday the 23rd; would either of those dates suit you?"

"But the election is on the 21st; it will be no use holding meetings after it is over."

"Well, I am sorry; but that is the first night I can offer you; the hall is booked right up to the 21st."

"That is most unfortunate," said Frank, in a disappointed tone. "However, I suppose we shall have to make the best of the situation, and hold our meetings out of doors. I only wish it were not so cold."

"No doubt an open-air meeting would be the best way out of the difficulty, and I don't suppose there will be any objection in your case, but I think you should obtain permission from the superintendent of police. Since the recent disturbances it has been necessary to make strict regulations about meetings, and none can be held unless authorized."

Thanking him for the hint, Frank and Joe repaired at once to the police office, and stated their case to the superintendent.

"What you ask is quite impossible, Mr. Ledingham. Meetings are only allowed to be held in the public hall, and permission to use it must be obtained from the Town Clerk."

"We have just come from him," said Frank, "and he tells us the public hall is engaged every night until the election."

"In that case I cannot help you."

"But surely you are not denying the right of meeting—the right of free speech?"

"Meetings are permitted under certain conditions, but only in the proper place, as I have said. This capitalist agitation has already led to serious disturbances, and it must be put down."

"Capitalist, did you say?"

"Call it capitalist—anti-socialist—what you will. It is contrary to the policy of the State. We have our sources of information, and we know that a regular campaign is being carried on among the unemployed and the more ignorant of the workers by capitalist agitators who have nothing to lose, and are simply actuated by jealousy of those who hold official positions. See here; this was found pinned to one of the town hall doors—the town hall, mind you, the seat of Government."

The superintendent unfolded a large sheet of paper, which turned out to be a hand-made poster, on which was scrawled in large letters:—

"Vote for Capitalism, and no Whips.
Down with the Socialist Exploiters!"

"Of course, I understand that it is your duty to protect the Government and keep order," said Frank rather bitterly; "but we are neither capitalists nor anti-socialists; we simply wish to hold a political meeting to put forward our candidate."

"That may or may not be so," said the superintendent sternly; "but I think it my duty to warn you, Mr. Ledingham, that you are strongly suspected of capitalist leanings. We have our sources of information, as I said before. If you will allow me to advise you, you will not take part in any meetings, political or other."

Frank and Joe left the police office feeling rather crest-fallen. It would evidently be difficult, if not impossible to hold a meeting, for they had no difficulty in understanding the hint that had been given them. Count Grimshaw's eyes were on them.

They soon decided that their best course would be to canvas the village by means of handbills, which could be pushed under the doors of all the houses—at night if necessary. There was a risk, almost amounting to a certainty, that their proceedings would be reported to the Government; but both were determined men, who were willing to risk a good deal in order to strike a blow at this intolerable tyranny. They hoped, too, that their action would serve as an example to other sections of the community, and although they had little sympathy with the capitalist movement among the unemployed, they looked for a good deal of support from the more dissatisfied members of the colony. They therefore returned home, and drafted out a short election address which should serve to introduce Joe to the electors as a candidate, and to solicit support at the polls.

They took the address round to the printing office, and handed it to the superintendent, with the request that he would print 2,500 copies. After carefully reading through it he readily agreed to do this.

"As to the cost," said Frank, "I suppose it will not amount to very much, but we should like to have some idea if you can oblige us."

"Oh, it will be quite trifling," replied the superintendent. "The thing is quite short, and we charge by labour-time; we cannot give a price beforehand, because we might make a profit, or a loss, and neither is permitted."

"Very well, we will leave it to you," said Frank, preparing to go. "I suppose you can have it done by this time to-morrow?"

"I am afraid not quite so soon as that," replied the superintendent. "We have a book just going through the press, and when that is finished there is a good deal of Government work, but we will do the best we can for you."

"A book!" said Frank. "Have some of the Newærans been launching forth in print?"

"Oh, yes; we have a good many authors in Newæra—rather too many, I think. This plan of giving standard wages to authors as long as they are writing has its disadvantages. You see, the longer an author takes over his book, the more he gets for it. I know at least one author who has been writing a book, or at any rate has been paid for writing one ever since he came to Newæra, and he is still at the first chapter."

"Rather an expensive work!" laughed Frank. "But I understand you have got one written and partly printed; what is it about?"

"We have several quite finished; come and look at them."

The superintendent tucked his whip under his arm, and led the way into the works.

"This is the first one we printed," he said, taking one from a pile of books. Frank read the title: "Modern Socialism; An Exposure of the Capitalist System."

"Are they all about socialism?" he asked, glancing through the pages.

"Yes, all on that and kindred subjects. Here is another: 'Newæra; An Example to Capitalist Societies.' That, I think, was written before Newæra was started, but it is a very good book all the same."

"And what is the one you are printing?"

"Oh, that is a kind of Utopia. 'Tidings from Somewhere,' is the title."

"Not a very original one, I think. Is the scene laid in England of the thirtieth century?"

"No, only the twenty-fifth."

"I hope that Utopia turned out better than one that I know of. How is the society organized?"

"I don't remember that anything is said about that, but there are some very fine characters, and it is very powerfully written."

"But if there is nothing about the society, what is the book about? What do the people do?"

"Oh, they sit around, and talk about the beginning of the twentieth century and capitalism."

"And nothing else? Is that their only occupation?"

"Well, sometimes they row or walk or drive, but they always talk about the beginning of the twentieth century."

"But how about work? I am interested, because I once thought of starting a Utopia of my own."

"Yes, I had forgotten about that. When they are not talking about the twentieth century they are talking about work. There are some very fine things said about work, and the capitalist system—very fine indeed."

Frank promised to buy a copy of the book when it was ready, and left the printing works with a final request that the handbills might be pushed through quickly.

The business of the election now began in earnest. Meetings were held every evening, and speeches were made by the various candidates.

Frank so far disregarded the warning he had received as to attend the first meeting at which Count Grimshaw was to speak.

The public hall was fairly filled, a large proportion of the audience consisting of town hall officials. There were also a good many workers, but very few women were present. They had got the vote.

Lord Bury was in the chair, and rather gave the impression of wishing he were out of it. There could scarcely have

been a greater contrast than that between the two noblemen. Lord Bury, short, round, and red, with an amiable if rather foolish smile on his broad face: Count Grimshaw, tall, muscular, alert, his whole bearing giving the impression of watchfulness and determination.

After Lord Bury had opened the meeting with a few appropriate words, which he had evidently committed to memory, Count Grimshaw rose to speak. He first briefly reviewed the history of the colony, passing lightly over Frank's well-intentioned but unsuccessful Dictatorship, and dealing more fully with the measures which had been taken by Parliament to put the affairs of the colony in order. His speech had been punctuated by cheers from the official element, but had been received with silence or occasional exclamations of impatience on the part of the workers who were present. This feeling of dissatisfaction was evidently increasing, when suddenly Count Grimshaw announced that he wished to put forward some important proposals for the betterment of the economic condition of Newæra. Immediately all was silent attention. The speaker now reminded his hearers of the present rate of payment to workers, £3 a week for men and women alike, with an allowance of 5s. for the wife of a married man, and 2s. 6d. for each child. He said a careful investigation had been made of the value of the work done by the various classes of workers. As a result he had come to the conclusion that the women workers were on the whole producing less than half as much value as the men. He pointed out that women did not require so much food as men, and that the present high wages had a demoralising effect, by encouraging them to squander the wealth of the colony on useless decoration of their persons. He went on to say that not only in the animal world, but also in every human society, the male was recognized as the superior being, and it was natural that this superiority should be rewarded with the larger share of the wealth produced. He therefore proposed, in case he were elected to the next Parliament, to bring in a bill which would reduce the wages of women workers to £2 a week, and at

the same time increase the wages of the men to £3 10s. a week. This would scarcely affect the total payment, but would, he felt sure, appeal to all fair-minded Newærans as a just measure, tending to the more harmonious working of the colony.

The speech was received with rapturous applause from the town hall section of the meeting, the women officials being apparently no less pleased than the men. The rest of the audience was completely taken by surprise. There were a few feeble protests from the women, but the men were flattered by the allusion to their superiority, and by no means displeased at the prospect of having their wages raised. It was felt, too, that the proposed alteration would remove a grievance which had been a constant source of jealousy, that of the skilled man who saw some mere chit of a girl getting the same wage that he himself received for his week's hard work.

Frank was astonished that a man of Grimshaw's acuteness should go out of his way to offend nearly half the voters in Newæra by publicly making a proposal which he could have quietly carried out after his election. He put this to Blanche on his return home, but she was so furiously indignant at his report of Grimshaw's speech that it was impossible to get her to discuss its political bearings. She was quite sure the women were not nearly so lazy as the men, and as to speaking of personal adornment in connection with Newæra pattern clothes! Frank did his best to bring her to reason, but in the end the brother and sister came very near to a quarrel. Probably that evening was a stormy one in a good many Newæran households.

The next evening another political meeting was held. Three of the sitting Members of Parliament were to speak on behalf of their own candidature, and the meeting assumed a very different appearance to that of the previous evening. A crowd of women had gathered round the public hall in the early afternoon, and when the doors were opened for the meeting, they rushed in and almost filled the hall. Even the official element was crowded out, and only a sprinkling of

men was to be seen—indeed, most of them chose obscure corners, where they were not likely to attract undue attention.

The first speaker rose, and faced a sea of upturned faces, before whose expression a timid man might well have quailed. He launched boldly into the subject of the hour, appealing to the sense of fairness of his hearers, and begging them to support the proposals that had been put forward by his honoured chief, on the ground of the undoubted inferiority of the female sex. He got no further. Instantly a dozen hand-bells rang out from different parts of the hall, and a deafening uproar arose. A stalwart dame, holding a dog-whip in her teeth, was seen clambering up the front of the platform, assisted from below, and before she had found a foothold, chairs and forms had been piled up, and the platform was invaded from both sides simultaneously. A wild rush was made for the speakers, but they were evidently prepared for the emergency, and quietly slipped out by the door at the back of the platform. The door was shut and bolted as the crowd of women surged against it. Attention was now drawn to a handful of men who were unobtrusively making their way towards the door. They were lost to view amid a whirling screaming mass of female humanity, and presently were shot forth from the great doors, in a dazed and dishevelled condition. A dozen women now made speeches simultaneously, while the ladies with the hand-bells rang continuously for silence, and all the others shouted. When the meeting had been in progress for about half an hour a procession was formed, and paraded the streets of Newæra till a late hour.

Frank and Joe were not at this meeting. They had gone round to the printing works, hoping to get their hand-bills, and to distribute a few among the people as they left the meeting. They were disappointed to find the bills not yet printed, so they repaired to the public hall, and waited outside in the hope of being able to hold an informal meeting in the street, and at any rate announce the fact that Joe was standing. The police would probably interfere,

but to have made their announcement would be an important step. The crowd of excited women which suddenly poured forth and formed into a procession showed them that their project was hopeless.

Their only chance lay in personal canvassing, and to this they devoted their spare time during the week that followed. They met with only a moderate degree of success. The air was full of politics, but the sex question was uppermost, and on this it was not possible to speak to a mixed audience without arousing the violent hostility of one half by favouring the views of the other, or offending both by lukewarmness. One circumstance did indeed seem likely to tell in their favour. Every evening after the first meeting the lanes around the village were thronged with men who had adjourned from the rather heated atmosphere of the domestic hearth to enjoy the cool night air. It was occasionally possible to get a knot of these men to listen to a short speech, but these informal meetings were usually broken up almost as soon as formed. The police were on the alert to enforce the rule against unauthorized meetings, but more dreaded than the police were the ladies who wielded the hand-bell and the megaphone. No sooner was a meeting got together than the battle cry "Justice for Women!" would be heard in the distance, and the meeting, warned by previous experience, would immediately break up and take to its heels.

The unemployed section of the colony had decided to run a capitalist candidate, and if Joe had felt able to join in the capitalist propaganda he might have counted on the support of this section, but he announced himself a consistent socialist opposed only to the present *régime* of official tyranny, and was therefore denounced by the capitalist party.

Meanwhile, meetings were being held nightly in the public hall. They were always packed with women, but only once was the scene of disorder repeated. Speaker after speaker denounced Count Grimshaw's policy as inhuman, ungallant, anti-socialist, brutal, and treacherous. An able speech was made by a woman who was a Member of the existing

Parliament and a candidate for the next. After pouring contempt on the Grimshaw policy, she reminded her enthusiastic audience that it always fell to the woman to lay out the earnings of the household, a task for which she was fitted by nature and by training; that happiness was most often found in those households where the man handed over his wages to his wife, and unhappiness where he spent them himself: it was therefore evident that the balance of advantage lay in paying the wages direct to the woman, and she proposed a readjustment of payments according to which the wife would receive £3 10s. per week, with an allowance of 2s. for each child and 2s. 6d. for a husband. This last sum she would in most cases hand over to him for spending money: it was only right that he should have something to spend on himself, but he was not likely to do himself any good if he spent more than 2s. 6d. a week on drink and tobacco, the only things a man seemed to care about.

Several of the male candidates endorsed these views, and advocated also a reduction of the hours of the town hall workers.

Election day arrived at last. Every Member of the existing Parliament was seeking re-election, and each had published an address. Fifteen were found to be in favour of the reduction of women's wages and of shorter official working hours. The remainder were opposed to both, but were generally in favour of payments being made direct to the wives. None of the unofficial candidates had been able to publish addresses. The printing office was still busy with Government work.

Polling took place in the public hall. To ensure safety and order, a considerable body of police was posted at the door. Among them were a number of men in plain clothes, one of whom was universally recognized as the leader of "Grimshaw's eyes." This man stood in front of the rest with a note-book in his hand. As Frank approached the hall to register his vote, the man raised his note-book, held his pencil in readiness to write, and fixed his eyes on Frank with a significant expression. Frank was not one to be

intimidated, and he barely noticed that an entry was made in the note-book as he passed into the hall. Glancing at the voting paper that was handed to him, he was at once struck with the fact that it did not contain a full list of adult Newærans as at the previous election. There were only thirty names on the paper : it was merely a list of the official candidates. At the foot was a statement that each elector was entitled to fifteen votes, not more than one vote to be given to any one candidate. Stifling his indignation he turned to the official in charge and asked him whether it was the intention of the Government to debar him from voting for anyone outside the official list. He was informed that he was at liberty to write on the paper the names of any other persons for whom he might wish to vote. He wrote down Joe Deacon's name, and voted for him alone.

That evening the result of the election was announced. Every one of the official candidates had been successful. Each of the "women's candidates" had received 2,955 votes. There were about 3,000 women voters. The votes cast for the remaining fifteen candidates varied slightly in number, but it was evident that they had been supported by the whole of the town hall staff and by most of the non-official male voters. Joe Deacon received six votes, and the capitalist candidate thirteen. Not many of their supporters ventured past the man with the note-book.

The Whole People had spoken, and the new Parliament was identical with the old. It celebrated its re-election by enacting that General Elections should in future be held every ten years. No alteration was made in the wages rates.

NOTE.—I can make no claim for originality in connection with the machinery which Newæra adopted for ascertaining the Will of the Whole People. The whole scheme of gagged Press, spies, official candidates, and "guarded" polling booths was invented and applied by socialists in the only purely socialist election of which I have found record : that of the Paris Commune of 1871. The official candidates were elected.

E. G. H.

CHAPTER VIII.

MIRA.

THE excitement of the election had subsided. Newæra had relapsed into its old way of life, yet there was a subtle change in the social atmosphere. Before the election the outlook of the workers had been brightened by a ray of hope. The then state of Newæra did not assuredly represent the will of the Whole People, but the Whole People would give voice to its will, the grinding tyranny would be shattered, the accursed system of police spies and corrupt officials would be banished for ever, and Newæra would emerge from her bondage to realize that fair ideal of peaceful co-operation and mutual helpfulness which had been hers, but which was now so sadly obscured.

This ray of hope had gone out. The official tyranny was supreme, all-powerful: the worker saw nothing ahead but a life of monotonous toil for the benefit of his oppressors, driven to work with whips, surrounded by spies, subjected to all manner of petty tyranny and injustice, his manhood beaten down, his spirit crushed. The one ray of hope had gone out, and dull despondency remained.

Some such thoughts as these passed through the mind of Frank Ledingham, as he painfully pursued his disgusting calling. For scavenging to-day was a very different task to that which he had voluntarily undertaken in the early days of Newæra. The habits of the people, like their dwellings and their persons, were filthy. They had lost all self-respect. No man would stir his hand to remove a public nuisance: that was for the Government, the hated oppressor, and the Government seemed only capable of oppression, but incapable of management. Already there had been

deaths from diphtheria and typhus, and it seemed not improbable that Newæra would end in pestilence.

Frank had been sent with two or three companions to cleanse one of the plague-stricken houses. The father and mother had died of typhus, and the children had been boarded out with other families. The place was in a state of indescribable filth and disorder. Frank's companions soon left him to cope with it alone. They had obtained some drink, and retired to a neighbouring outhouse. The superintendent was not likely to come near the place until it had been reduced to something like order and cleanliness. Frank would do the work—why should they risk their health?

Frank's heart was filled with rebellious thoughts. For an hour he worked doggedly on, then, sickened and disheartened, he threw down his shovel, went to a part of the enclosure where he was hidden from observation by a projecting angle of the wall, sat down on an upturned tub, and gave himself up to brooding thoughts. What could he do to improve the situation? He was merely one of the lowest grade of workers, under constant surveillance of the town hall spies, suspected of harbouring designs against the Government—what could he do? And then there was Blanche. A great change had been coming over her. She had lost all her cheerful vivacity, all care for her appearance, and for the order of her surroundings: her temper had become sullen and peevish——

Crash!

What was that? Frank found himself lying on the ground, blinded and stunned: something had struck him across the face and eyes, something which coiled round his head, and came away with a horrible wrench that had thrown him violently to the ground. For a minute he lay almost senseless, then, hearing a low laugh close beside him, he sprang to his feet, and confronted Walter Grimshaw, whip in hand.

“So I have caught you skulking at last, have I?” said the Count with a brutal laugh. “Now do you remember

what you said to me that day in the mechanics' shop, the first week we were here? Perhaps you have forgotten, but Grimshaw does not forget."

Frank stood gazing at him in silence, then, with sudden resolution, sprang at his throat.

But Grimshaw was too quick for him. Again the lash coiled itself round his head, and blows were rained down on him from the butt end of the whip, till he lay a huddled senseless heap on the rank untidy grass. Grimshaw gave him a contemptuous push with his foot, then turned on his heel and leisurely strolled away.

How long Frank lay there he never knew. He was first aroused to consciousness by feeling a cool bandage laid across his burning eyes and brow. He was dimly aware that someone was softly moving about him, soothing his wounds, and presently something was placed between his lips, and a few drops of burning spirit trickled down his throat. This quickly revived him, and he sat up, drawing the bandage from his eyes. At first he could distinguish nothing, it was almost dark; but presently, as his eyes became accustomed to the gloom, he saw a woman crouching on the grass beside him and eagerly watching him.

He did not remember to have seen her before: she was a young woman, a mere child he would have said, but her face was drawn and haggard; it was the face of one who had passed through prolonged mental agony. Her black hair hung loose and dishevelled about her face, her clothing was soiled and torn, and as she rose from the ground and stood regarding him, Frank saw what filled him with indignation: a mere child, and yet——

Painfully he struggled to his feet, and staggered to a seat in a little summer-house that stood with gaping roof and broken decaying floor in a corner of the enclosure. Seated there, he felt his strength returning, and presently his companion brought some scraps of food, and sitting down beside him, shared with him her own scanty meal.

Touched by her kindly sympathy and her sad appearance, Frank endeavoured to draw her into conversation, to get her

to talk about herself. At first she was timid and bashful; she gave evasive answers to his questions, or let them pass unanswered; but gradually Frank's friendly manner won upon her, and she was induced to tell her story. There was indeed little to tell.

Her name was Mira. She had come to the colony with her father and mother, and two brothers younger than herself. She was not old enough to be allowed to work, and she thought herself too old for school. She spent most of the summer days in the country. Then some of the works were stopped, the men had nothing to do. She became friendly with one of them, and they used to go walks together every day. They wanted to get married, and went to the registrar, but he refused to marry them, because, he said, she was only a child, and ought to be at lessons. They decided to dispense with his services. Plenty more were doing the same, and they thought it was no harm. People did not look at these things as they did in England, and if—she faltered—if anything happened, the Government would pay them more wages. Then her trouble came on her, and Sam left her—she had heard that he was courting a fine lady, but perhaps that was not true. He found someone he liked better than her, and now he was with someone else—that was his third. Then her father began to have friends at his house to talk about the Government and make plans. One of the Eyes was among them, and her father was discharged from work. She applied for work, saying that she was older than she really was. She was put to some sewing work, but the other girls laughed at her because she had not kept her man. She stayed away one day, and the superintendent warned her, and next time he discharged her. She had been wandering about ever since, mostly in the country, but in the evening she went round the backs of the houses, and some of the people gave her food. They had their own troubles, and could not do much for her. She had always kept herself straight: she knew plenty who had not, and one drowned herself in the sea; nobody seemed to miss her, and perhaps

that was the best way, but she did not dare. She wanted to get away from this horrible place; she had friends in England who would be good to her, but the police would not let anyone go on the boat. She could not think why they made her stop here, where nobody wanted her; but some said they did not want the people in England to know what was going on. She would gladly promise not to tell. This evening she had been wandering about the back gardens, the fences were all broken down, and nobody took any trouble with them now. She had found a bottle with brandy in it in a shed, and then she had found Frank lying on the ground. She thought he was dead, and was frightened, but then she remembered the brandy, and went for it, and it had revived him.

Her tale being finished, Frank thanked her for what she had done, and begged her to come with him, and he would put her under Blanche's care. Probably the Government would not allow her to live with them—their house was watched—but she might come there whenever she liked, and they would do whatever they could for her. At first she was frightened on learning who Frank was, but he reassured her, and they went together to Liberty Street. A few words sufficed to explain the situation to Blanche, who gladly responded to Frank's appeal.

Frank left the two girls together and went to his room. His head ached, but otherwise he was feeling better, and he wanted to be alone. Hour after hour he sat in his cold room, thinking, thinking. This poor girl's pitiful story had profoundly touched him. Who was responsible for her evil plight? Sam Deacon, no doubt; but who had provided the environment in which Sam and Mira had been actors? He, Frank Ledingham. He turned to his own wrongs. He, a man of spirit, had been beaten like a cur, beaten with a whip. For what? For skulking. For shirking the work that had been given him to do. And he had been skulking, there was no question about that. He had hidden in a corner where he thought nobody would see him. He, Frank Ledingham! What had brought him to that? The forces

he himself had set in motion. And Walter Grimshaw, with his absurd title. He had been a decent workman in his father's works. He was now a brutal tyrant. How had it come about? And Walter Sinclair, his old friend—what of him? A haughty official who had left his friend in the lurch. And Blanche—a spiritless, peevish drudge. And Sam Deacon and his victims? And the many others who had enacted tragedies similar to that of Mira? Little more than a year ago all these had been happy, useful members of society. Who was responsible for their degradation? He, Frank Ledingham. Yet he had acted for the best. He had aspired to set up a society which should be an example to the world. His ideal had been a high one; he had followed it zealously and unselfishly, giving up a princely fortune, a position of honour and power, to follow the calling of a common scavenger. His ideal was a high one. The society he had pictured in his imagination and striven to realize, was a society which should be free from the abuses which marred the society in which he had been reared—the exploitation of man by man and of woman by man, the arrogant use of power, the grinding poverty, squalor, unemployment—he laughed bitterly as he contrasted his ideal with the reality he had succeeded in producing, and contrasted that reality with the society to which it was to be a model. Yes, his ideal had been a noble one, but the means he had chosen to attain it—what of them? What of socialism? The best part of his adult life had been spent in the endeavour to persuade his countrymen to adopt these very means which had wrought such havoc and disaster. His countrymen had laughed at him as a crank and a fanatic. He had despised them as selfish and unfeeling. Perhaps they were—some of them certainly were—but all their selfishness had failed to produce a tithe of the misery that had followed his attempt at unselfish idealism.

And now what was to be done? How undo the evil for which he held himself responsible? Clearly he could do nothing here. He was an atom of dust beneath the heel of the Grimshaw tyranny. He must get out of the island, he

and Blanche. Then he would consider what steps to take. To liberate the slaves of Newæra must be his first task, and then ? To devote his life to opposing the socialistic forces which he had been foremost in abetting. Before he laid his head on the pillow his resolution was taken ; it only remained to formulate plans for his escape.

CHAPTER IX.

FREEDOM.

It was Thursday, and the little steamer from the mainland could be seen on the horizon laboriously making her weekly journey to Newæra. All was bustle on the little stone jetty; porters were carrying sacks and parcels from the warehouse near by, and placing them in readiness to be put on board. An official from the town hall paced up and down, keeping a sharpeye on all that was going on, and occasionally stopping to exchange a word with the superintendent of police, who stood by the gate halfway down the jetty, and sharply scrutinized every person and package that passed through. As the steamer drew up, a squad of uniformed police marched down the road, and took up their position on either side of the gate. There had been one or two ugly rushes for liberty of late, and an extra strong body of police had been told off to deal with any emergency. The steamer made fast to the jetty, and the captain, stepping ashore, handed his papers to the town hall official. The porters from the warehouse then went on board, and soon were seen emerging from the hatchway with parcels of goods, while the little hand crane on the jetty was got to work, lifting off the heavier packages. The foreign trade of Newæra had shrunk to very small dimensions, and the loading and unloading was soon accomplished. There were no passengers. Some enterprising newspaper correspondents had from time to time attempted to gain access to the colony, but such inquisitive persons never got beyond the jetty. They were informed that a full account of the colony's doings could be read in the *Newæra Record*, some copies of which were regularly sent to the

mainland, and generally reprinted and distributed broadcast by the English socialist Press.

All was now ready; the whistle was blown, and the gangway was being drawn up when a porter was seen struggling under a large sack, on his way from the warehouse. The sack appeared to be too heavy for him, his legs bent beneath its weight, and he staggered from side to side as he made his way down the steep road. The captain saw him coming, and with an impatient exclamation signed to the men at the gangway to hold their hands. Slowly the man with the sack approached; he was on the jetty, and had almost reached the cordon of police, when suddenly he appeared to be seized with faintness; he reeled, recovered himself, reeled again, and before anyone could give him a helping hand, he had fallen over the side with his burden, and struck the water with a splash. The tide was up, and the water was deep; everyone on the jetty rushed to the side, and craned over, watching for him to rise. The sack could be seen floating on the surface, and soon the man's head appeared. He struck out feebly, evidently with the intention of reaching the sack, though it seemed doubtful whether his strength would hold out. The police were clustered thick along the side of the jetty, which had no parapet; one called for a rope, another for a boat, but as these articles did not appear of their own accord, there seemed some danger that the man would drown. The excitement was at its height when two policemen emerged from a cottage near the entrance to the jetty, and ran at full speed to the scene of the accident. One of them, anxious to see what was happening in the water, peered between the heads of two policemen who were watching the struggle below them, and in his eagerness, pushed one of them so that he lost his balance. This man clutched at his neighbour to save himself, and in a moment both were in the water. The policeman who had been the cause of this accident, called loudly for a boat, and himself led the way on to the steamer, where a boat was already being cut loose on the davits. There were no boats in the harbour, as it had

been deemed advisable to remove all possible temptation to any who might have attempted a perilous escape. Soon the boat was lowered, and the three men were hauled out of the water. The two policemen were none the worse, but the unfortunate porter was in a state of collapse. He was carried up the steps and laid out on the flags, where a crowd of policemen were ready to assist him. Meanwhile the boat was rowed back to the ship and hauled up, the gangway raised, and the steamer cast off. The captain refused to wait for the sack of merchandise which was still floating in the bay.

When the steamer was about a mile from land, the captain had occasion to go below, and was astonished to see two Newæra policemen sitting in the saloon. He knew of the elaborate arrangements for preventing the escape of Newærans, and had no idea that any were on board. As he entered the saloon, one of the men advanced to meet him, and taking off his helmet, offered to shake hands. The captain gazed at him, then uttered an exclamation of surprise,—“Mr. Ledingham!” He had often taken Frank across in the days when Newæra was being prepared for its inhabitants. He glanced rather sharply at Frank’s companion, but Frank stood partly in front of him, muttering something about “a friend of his,” and the captain forbore to ask questions.

The situation was soon explained, and the captain laughed heartily at the clever acting of honest Joe Deacon, with his bag of chips.

Arrived at the small seaport town on the mainland, Frank and his companion took rooms at an hotel. Frank made an expedition into the town, and returned in a decent, if too obviously ready-made, suit of clothes. He was soon followed by an assistant from one of the ladies’ outfitting shops, and that evening he and Blanche sat down to the first good dinner they had had for many a month.

Next day, they set out for London, where they put up at a first-class hotel. They felt like children out for a holiday, and for two days gave themselves up to the mere

enjoyment of living, with no spies to dog their footsteps.

But Frank had important matters to attend to, and on the third day after his arrival, betook himself to the city office of his father's old friend and solicitor, Mr. Clarke.

CHAPTER X.

VACCINATION.

"Why, Frank! This is good. I thought you were king of—New-Era, isn't it? and wouldn't deign to travel without your court, or to speak to a poor commoner like me."

Frank took the chair that Mr. Clarke offered him. "No," he said, "I wasn't exactly a king, and I certainly had no court. You see, I have left Newæra: Blanche and I came away on Friday."

"Ah, and how is your sister? I suppose you have got your model society working, and have come to invite us to go and look at it."

"No, not just that: the fact is, Newæra has not turned out as well as I expected, and that is what I wanted to see you about."

"Oh ho! that's it, is it? Then I'm afraid you have come to the wrong shop, my boy. I have had to straighten out some pretty crooked affairs in my time, but—an island full of socialists—no, Frank, you must really excuse me."

"I didn't think of asking you to straighten Newæra out. I merely wanted to talk things over with you, and ask your advice as to what steps I had best take in view of what has happened there."

"Very well; in that case you must tell me what has happened there. I have seen one or two copies of that veracious paper, the *Newæra Record*, and I thought—well, I won't tell you what I thought. Let us have your story."

Frank ran over the chief events in the history of Newæra, ending with a description of the present state of the society in the island. When he had finished Mr. Clarke gave a long whistle.

"Well," he said, "I expected something of the kind to happen, but I scarcely thought events would march quite so rapidly. Now, what do you want my advice about?"

"In the first place, I want to know what is the best way to get those poor folks out of the pickle I have got them into."

"My advice on that point is very simple. They are socialists; they have got socialism. Let 'em stew in their own gravy."

"You mean leave them to their fate? I feel that I ought not to do that. There is my good friend, Joe Deacon, who helped me to escape. I can't leave him in the lurch. Then there is poor little Mira, and plenty more like her, innocent victims of my folly. I feel a heavy responsibility for their fate, and I want to do what I can for them, though a great deal of the mischief can never be undone."

"You want to organize a rescue party? I think there need be no difficulty about that. This is a free country—we'll send a man-of-war over. Leave all that to me: I'll approach the proper authorities, and nobody shall be kept there against his will. Then as to Mira and the rest, we'll consider what can be done for them. I think you should not take too much upon yourself; they were all free agents, and are only suffering the consequences of their own acts. Now, is there anything else?"

"Yes, there is. You know my father was a very rich man. A great deal of his money has been sunk in Newæra; that is gone. But there is still a good deal of property that will come to me when the two years are up. I want to devote it to undoing the harm I have done—to fighting socialism, in fact."

"By Jove, Frank, you are something like a convert! but you are too impulsive—that was always your fault. Let your money stay where it is; it will do a lot more good than if you spent it in some new heroic scheme."

"I may be impulsive, but I have thought this matter over very carefully, and I am quite determined to strike a blow at socialism, if only I can see how to set about it."

“Why, Frank, don’t you see that you have already given socialism the shrewdest knock it has ever had in this country? Nothing remains but to rub it in, and that can easily be accomplished. Publish a full and true account of everything that happened in Newæra; there are any number of papers that will be only too glad to have the account, and pay you handsomely into the bargain. It can afterwards be published in book form, and will sell like wildfire. What more do you want?”

“I will certainly publish an account, but I should like to do something more, something permanent—to endow an institution for fighting socialism, or something of that kind. You see, an account of Newæra may have some effect for a little time, but it will be forgotten, and then the lesson will have to be learnt again, and there will be nobody to teach it.”

Mr. Clarke sat looking thoughtfully out of the window for a few minutes; then he turned to Frank.

“You know,” he said, “that there was a time when the small-pox was a terrible scourge in this country; whole towns were decimated by it, and when once it got a hold, nobody knew how to fight it. It was like a fire that had to burn itself out, and die down for want of fuel. Then a clever man discovered a remedy. He introduced the poison in a mild form into one of the limbs. This caused severe local inflammation and suffering, but did not seriously affect the rest of the body, and the ultimate result was that the whole body was rendered immune. But only for a time. They say the vaccination should be repeated every seven years, then there is very little danger of small-pox getting a hold, and, as a matter of fact, the disease has become comparatively rare since vaccination has been generally adopted. You follow me?”

“Yes, I follow you, but what has that to do with——”

“With socialism? It has everything to do with it. Let me explain. Human society has been subject to the ravages of a disease that is as old as small-pox, and quite as deadly. Whole nations have been destroyed by it. England at the

present time is sick with it. A clever man arose—I am speaking to him now—and he vaccinated his country. He applied the virus to an outlying island, and the local inflammation was very severe, according to the account you have just given me. But I think the country will be immune, for a few years at any rate; then the effect will pass off. You ask me what should be done. I say vaccinate the country again and again, as often as the disease shows signs of reappearing. Now do you follow me?”

“I think I begin to see what you mean; but tell me how you would apply the remedy.”

“Very simply. You have set up a socialist colony, and invited the socialists of the country to work it in their own way. They have given their countrymen a lesson that will not soon be forgotten. But eventually the effect will pass away; socialism will raise its ugly head again. Very well, Newæra is still there. You keep the buildings in repair; that will not cost very much. When the time comes to repeat the vaccination, you merely invite the new crop of socialists to give a demonstration of their precious system; you set them up with six months’ supplies, and—there you are. Either they refuse and confess themselves humbugs, or they accept and the vaccination process is repeated.”

“I think that is a splendid scheme,” said Frank, delighted. “I will gladly devote the rest of my fortune to carrying it out.”

“Not so fast young man. Don’t be so impulsive. Why should you take it all on yourself? Keep your fortune where it is; there are plenty of people who will be glad to make a sacrifice in order to save their country from socialism; I am among their number. What I propose is this: you invite subscriptions to a vaccination fund; if you like to head the subscription list, well and good. You raise a fairly large sum of money and invest it. When the time comes to repeat the vaccination, sufficient interest will have accumulated to start the colony afresh. The capital will remain intact, and the process can be repeated *ad infinitum*.”

“Thank you,” said Frank. “May I ask you to take the

necessary steps for raising the subscription? I will of course bear the initial expenses."

"With all the pleasure in the world. In the meantime, you get on with your 'History of Newæra'; when that is published it will be time enough to open our vaccination fund."

Frank rose to go. "I have been very reluctant to take up this position," he said. "I feel like a traitor to a cause that was very dear to me. But I am absolutely convinced that I am right. Fancy England undergoing the horrors of Newæra!"

"You need have no misgivings, Frank, and the country is deeply indebted to you. As to socialism, I would put it this way: A socialist society is a pyramid standing on its apex. Theoretically, there is no reason why it should not stand; there is no reason why it should fall in one direction rather than another; but in practice, there is sure to be some slight disturbance, which, however minute, is sufficient to put it out of balance. Then it falls by its own weight. A socialist society of perfect beings might stand, theoretically, but if there is in that society a single individual who has in his composition the slightest trace of the Old Adam, he will at once be at an advantage over all the others. If he is less industrious, less unselfish, less efficient than the rest, he will at once be in the position of receiving more from his fellows than they receive from him. The equilibrium of the pyramid is upset, and the fall must follow. Of course, if the pyramid is a very small one, a single strong man may hold it up. Such a man was your Robert Owen. He set up his pyramid of New Harmony, nicely balanced on its apex, with the rewards at the bottom and the penalties at the top. He held it in that position until he was called away for a few months. He left his pyramid nicely balanced; when he came back it was leaning ominously. He pushed it up again, and held it by sheer force for several years. Then he decided to divide the labour with three or four others. It seemed an ideal arrangement—one at each corner, propping it up; but there was just this defect—when one felt the weight coming

his way, he gave a vigorous shove, the man opposite thought it was on him, and shoved harder. Soon they were all shoving against each other. Then one let go, and—crash! down it came. Was it splintered to atoms? No, not at all. A wonderful thing happened. The pyramid turned right over on to its base, and the next thing we see is an ordinary village community, standing on its broad base of capital and competition—the rewards at the top, and the penalties at the bottom. It needed no propping up now, and poor old Robert left in disgust.”

Frank laughed ruefully, and left the office.

CHAPTER XI.

ADDRESSED TO THE READER.

MY friend, you have followed me patiently, or perhaps impatiently, thus far, and now I wish a word with you before we part. Perhaps you are a socialist. They are of many types. I have heard that there are socialists who regard socialism as a means for acquiring other people's property—persons who have the instincts of the burglar without his courage. I never met a socialist of this type, and perhaps they do not exist. If not, it is small thanks to those of your leaders who, in the ardour of their proselytizing zeal, spend themselves in appeals to almost all the evil passions of depraved humanity. If such socialists do exist, and if you are one of them, then, my friend, I have nothing to say to you. One does not argue with burglars. I expect the men in blue will deal with you, if ever you develop the courage of your convictions.

But I do not think you are a socialist of that type. I think you are a man or a woman who has seen poverty, disease and squalor existing side by side with riches, idleness, and wanton luxury. You have seen the deserving who have not half a chance, and the undeserving who have opportunities showered on them. You have seen the idle living on their dividends, and the industrious seeking work. You have seen—— But there is no need to remind you of these things: your books are full of them, and of little else. And you believe that in socialism you have a remedy. There I differ from you. I believe that socialism would aggravate every one of the evils you and I deplore. That is why I oppose it. I have no cure-all to offer you in its place. I believe that all preventable human suffering is the result of the violation of laws, moral or economic. I believe that the

only conceivable way of preventing this suffering is to put an end to the violation of these laws—that the surest, and indeed the only way in which the violation of law can be prevented, is by ensuring that the evil results of the law breaking shall fall with the utmost directness and intensity on the law breaker. And I believe that the surest way of increasing the violation of law, and the suffering it infallibly entails, is to shield the law breaker from the evil results of his actions, and to spread these evil results over the community at large. That is the very essence of socialism, as I have tried to show.

Do not misunderstand me. I do not say that all those who suffer are law breakers. Many are innocent. Wrong doing always causes the innocent to suffer, and there is besides a great deal of suffering that is not the result of wrong doing but of accident. Fires, burglaries, unemployment, sickness—all cause suffering, mostly economic in its nature. This suffering cannot be prevented, but it can be mitigated. The prudent insure against it—not by State insurance, but by private insurance, especially that kind of insurance which consists in money saved. But many cannot afford it? When it ceases to be true, as it is true, that the class which habitually neglects this and all other forms of insurance, is precisely the class which spends the largest proportion of its income in harmful luxuries—then, and not till then, will it be useful to inquire whether insurance can be afforded. At present the disability is not economic, but moral. The people cannot save because they have not self-restraint. They can acquire self-restraint in one way only—by exercising it, not by being relieved of the necessity to exercise it.

Of course I have not convinced you. You will say that the deplorable things that happened in Newæra would not happen in an actual socialist community. And you will say this, although you may be aware, as you should be aware, that many of these deplorable things did happen in one or other of the very numerous socialist communities (nearly a hundred, I think) which have been founded in hope, and

which have uniformly failed. For you believe that their failure was due to accident, to mismanagement, to environment, to—anything but socialism. You believe, in short, that the pyramid *will* stand on its point. It is only a matter of balancing, and you know how to do the trick. Perhaps you are a plain man, and would not claim so much for yourself; but you assuredly believe that you could vote for some other plain man, and thereby confer on him that superhuman wisdom and virtue, which (according to your creed) are inherent in the plain man who has been voted for and has become an official.

Perhaps you are right in this belief. Perhaps you or your proxy can perform this balancing feat. What I have to ask you is this: Will you not show us how it is done? Give us an actual demonstration? Do not, I pray you, use your country as the subject of your demonstration. Your country's welfare is dear to you, and, remember, accidents *have* happened. No; your demonstration shall be made in some secluded English Newæra of your own choosing, your own planning, your own managing; you shall do everything except bear the expense. Perhaps you may be willing or may think it advisable to contribute to that, as the Newærans did; but that shall be left to you to decide.

You must not plead that the demonstration cannot be made because society is not yet good enough for socialism. That society is not good enough for socialism is true. That society never will be good enough for socialism is, I think, equally true. On this point you may differ. You may believe that capitalism, if allowed to continue long enough, will so improve and regenerate society that it will ultimately be good enough for socialism. I have no such faith in the regenerative force of capitalism; but let that pass. Consider what you are asking. Cast your eyes into the future, and tell me if you think it likely that in this England of ours there will ever exist a society—a natural development of our present society—which will not contain one individual who will object to hand over his property to the State—one individual who will detest this system of yours,

who will do his utmost to prevent its-working smoothly, and his utmost to turn it to his personal advantage—not one idle loafer, rich or poor—not one greedy capitalist—not one person morally diseased. You must admit that you will always have many such individuals to deal with, and that they will make your task infinitely difficult. But I am asking you to make your demonstration in a community where none of these elements shall exist—a community every member of which shall be a convinced and ardent socialist—a socialist of your own choosing, who will do his utmost to make your demonstration successful. Is it likely that you will ever meet with such ideal conditions outside your Newæra? You must admit that it is more than unlikely: it is impossible. Your socialists will not be perfect—they will be human beings; but your system is capable of being applied to human beings, is it not? Else, “why cumbereth it the ground”?

And remember, you are not asked to produce a perfect society—merely a society that will stand. Capitalist societies stand, have stood for ages: never stood more firmly than now. Show me a socialist society that will stand—a socialist society in which the conditions of life shall be not worse than the conditions in the capitalist society around it—a socialist society which shall be tolerable to its socialist members—that is all I ask. You cannot do it. There is a direct challenge, will you take it up?

“But,” you may object, “is this to be a game of heads you win, tails I lose? If the experiment fails socialism will be discredited; if it succeeds—what then? Will it not be said that, although socialism may succeed in a society of picked individuals, it would be a very different matter to apply it to a nation of heterogeneous individuals?” This would be said, and it would be true, but it need not deter you in the least. We are agreed, you and I, that society is not good enough for socialism; but we differ in this—that you believe socialism is a desirable ideal which would work under proper conditions, whereas I believe socialism is an undesirable ideal which would not work under any conditions. Prove that you are right, and your battle will be won. You will

have proved to your countrymen that socialism is a good thing, an ideal to aspire to and to prepare for. This will surely be very easy, for you will only need to point your countrymen to your Newæra and say, "See this heaven on earth—this is what England would be like under socialism."

There is one further consideration which I hesitate to place before you, because it seems so like an appeal to avarice. The Newærans will be very wealthy. Your High Priest, Hyndman, has explained that your capitalist employer robs you of three-fourths of the wealth you produce. Under socialism the whole will be yours, and your present earnings will be increased fourfold. But this is not all. Prophet Bax assures you that under socialism labour will be five times as productive as it is under capitalism. You must multiply again by five, your income will be twenty times what it is at present. You need feel no hesitation about accepting this estimate, for there can be no doubt that these gentlemen will join the colony and show how the thing is done.

And now you, my anti-socialist friend—you who recognize socialism as a curse. Perhaps you are a capitalist. If so, I expect you are a working man: most capitalists are working men—indeed, I suspect the greater number of them are members of what is called the working class, the hand-working, wage-earning class. But, capitalist or not, I want to ask you what you think of my vaccination scheme. Do you not think it time your country was vaccinated? And will you not see that it is vaccinated, and without loss of time? For my scheme is an eminently practicable one, and it is intended to be put in practice. I have in mind one of the charming islands of the Scilly group, with an ideal climate, a fertile soil, and few inhabitants. Other islands may be more suitable or more easily available. Indeed, an island may not be necessary, though I think it would be preferable. I hear to-day of a newly-built and recently-deserted village on the mainland, with a deserted factory thrown in.

The site selected, it only remains to erect on it a Newæra, capable, I suggest, of accommodating say, 10,000 souls, a village or small town of the size of Holyhead. This village would be stocked with provisions and raw materials for, say, six months. Any socialist will tell you what articles and how many of each are consumed by 10,000 persons in six months. The Newæra Committee will give you a list of articles; you will buy them, and there your task will end. For it is an essential feature of the scheme that it shall be managed entirely by socialists.

And the cost? I do not know what that would be. The site may be provided free by some patriotic landowner, and for the rest it will be easy to get an estimate. Model villages are built cheaply nowadays. I do not think the cost will trouble you. I would remind you that millions of pounds are being taken from you yearly for the furtherance of socialistic schemes, municipal and national. One purpose of my scheme will be to show the country whither it is tending, and to check this ceaseless demoralising drain. After all, you cannot take your money with you when you die, and any that you spend now will be no longer available for death duties for the promotion of socialism. Will not some Sir Philip Ledingham come forward, or several of them?

"But," you say, "it is useless to set the snare in sight of the birds. The socialists will have nothing to do with it."

The scheme is not a snare. It is merely an opportunity for socialists to put in practice that which they claim to be practicable. You and I believe it to be impracticable. We present them with an opportunity of proving we are wrong. If they are honest in their professions—and we must credit them with honesty—they will embrace the opportunity. If they decline—why, then, their fangs are drawn, and our object is gained. A socialist who offers a scheme which he dare not put in practice, under conditions of his own choosing, is not a very dangerous person. There can be no doubt that very many socialists are honestly convinced of the practicability of their system, and will be glad of the

opportunity to put it to the proof. We, on the other hand, shall have given proof of the genuineness and disinterestedness of our opposition to it by finding most of the money for the experiment.

On two points a warning is necessary. It is probable that some of the leaders will do their utmost to dissuade their followers from taking part in the demonstration. I can imagine that they will fill the air with clouds of rhetoric about capitalism, wage-slavery, exploitation, surplus value, and the rest of it, and will then call their hearers to witness that since they have now proved socialism to be a cure for every social ill, no practical demonstration is necessary. The patient may struggle a little, but he must be vaccinated nevertheless. If the more intelligent socialists decline to assist in the demonstration, the result will be the same, but it may be reached a little sooner.

The other point is, that you must not be content with a single demonstration. Socialists will say that the colony would not have failed if this or that arrangement had been different. They must be permitted, nay, encouraged, and, if necessary, compelled to repeat the experiment. The vaccination must be repeated as often as the disease reappears, and your arrangements must be made accordingly.

Lastly, I wish to speak to you, my friend, who are neither socialist nor anti-socialist: you who have not looked into the matter closely, but are inclined to regard socialism as something sociable and friendly—a plan for helping one another, redressing wrongs, removing poverty, giving every one a chance, and generally producing a heaven on earth.

I have tried to show you what socialism is, and what results it is likely to produce. But I do not ask you to take my word for it. As to what socialism is, you can best find this out by reading the literature of the subject, a sufficiently dreary task, I can assure you, and one beset with difficulties, since socialists are very chary about making practical proposals, and very far from unanimous when they do make them.

This is a very real difficulty to anyone who would

endeavour to construct a socialist Utopia as I have done, for he must constantly make choice between the many divergent policies which socialists advocate, and often he must formulate a policy, because, in matters of the utmost importance, they give him no guidance whatever. Further, he has the difficulty of giving his characters the appearance of sanity, while making them talk the language of orthodox socialism. In order to guard against the charge of misrepresentation, which might be made by socialists, and against the charge of exaggeration, which might be made by those who are unfamiliar with the subject, I have adopted the plan of putting into the mouths of my socialist characters *verbatim* extracts from the writings of prominent socialists, whenever I found it necessary for them to use arguments or express sentiments which might lay them open to the suspicion of being mentally unhinged. I have not indicated where such quotations occur, because to do so would give an air of unreality to the story—people do not spout quotations in real life. I take this opportunity of expressing my indebtedness to Messrs. Blatchford, Bax and Quelch, Gronlund, Hyndman, Kautsky, Davidson, Snowden, and Suthers, whose writings have been laid under contribution.

As to the results that socialism would produce, this can best be ascertained by experiment. Many experiments have been made, and their results may be summed up in one word—Failure. Socialists claim that these experiments were not conducted under fair conditions. The conditions were in all cases chosen by socialists. All the experiments were on too small a scale, but this was entirely in their favour. A family is a socialist community which is capable of working perfectly.

My vaccination scheme is intended to give socialists an opportunity of conducting an experiment under conditions which they must consider fair. The conditions will be entirely under their own control. I ask you to support this scheme. You need not regard it as a vaccination scheme, but as a crucial experiment to be watched with impartial eyes.

Believe me, this is a question which concerns you very nearly. Your country is rapidly drifting in the direction of socialism : therefore it behoves you to know whether socialism is good or bad, whether it is to heaven or to hell that you are being hurried.

England will never become a socialist nation. It would cease to exist as a nation long before it arrived there : for a nation may be destroyed by socialism, without being a socialist nation. The Roman Empire was far from being a socialist State, but the socialist measures which it adopted were among the principal causes of its destruction. Mr. Lecky says :—

“ Above all, the public distribution of corn, and occasionally of money, was carried on to such an extent, that so far as the first necessities of life were concerned, the whole free population of Rome was supported gratuitously by the Government. To effect this distribution promptly and lavishly was the main object of the imperial policy, and its consequences were worse than could have resulted from the most extravagant poor laws, or the most excessive charity. The mass of the people were supported in absolute idleness by corn which was given without any reference to desert, and was received, not as a favour, but as a right, while gratuitous public amusements still further diverted them from labour. Under these influences the population rapidly dwindled away. Productive enterprise was almost extinct in Italy, and an unexampled concurrence of causes made a vicious celibacy the habitual condition.”

“ But,” you will say, “ what has this to do with us ? We are not likely to adopt the free distribution of corn.” Do not be too sure. Rome adopted the socialist principle that the State is responsible for the maintenance of those who do not maintain themselves. Rome applied that principle, and Rome fell. For centuries England has adopted the same principle in a limited form in her Poor Laws, and untold suffering has been caused ; but within the last few years the application of this principle has been vastly extended. It has come to be accepted that the State is responsible for the

maintenance of two large classes of the population—the young whose parents do not maintain them, and the old who have made no provision for their own maintenance. Already there are insistent demands that others shall be added to the class of the State-maintained.

Very likely you think this is a good thing. You think that the principle which caused demoralization, suffering, and extinction in the Roman Empire will produce the contrary results in the British Empire. Would it not be well to be sure before going any further in this direction? The experiment can be tried. The socialists believe in this State-maintenance principle, and, with your support and assistance, will set up a miniature State, which shall guarantee to its members immunity from poverty and almost all other evils. You shall watch the experiment, and, if the result pleases you, then you will go forward with a light heart in the path you are now treading. If the result does not please you, then I hope you will turn back.

Rome was not destroyed by State maintenance alone. Two minor causes are said to have contributed to bring about her downfall—the gladiatorial games, and slavery.

We have no gladiators. Our popular theatre is degrading enough, and now there is a demand that it shall be made national and free—as in Rome.

And slavery? We have done with that! I think not. You and I are compelled to work so many weeks each year for our common taskmaster. We have to hand over the earnings of these weeks in rates and taxes, and every year a few more days of compulsory labour is demanded from us. Year by year the State and the Municipality increase their demands, and increase also their encroachments on what used to be the domain of the individual. You see no danger in this: you think it is a good thing: you acknowledge that the Government official can spend your earnings to better purpose than you can spend them yourself.

Would it not be well to make quite sure that there is no danger—to test the capacity of the Government official before entrusting him further with the spending of your

earnings and the management of your affairs? The socialists say that you and all your affairs should be managed by officials. They are steadily pushing your country in that direction. Let them first show a miniature State official-managed. If the result pleases you—well. If not—then I think you will decide in future to spend your own earnings in your own way, and to manage your own affairs with the least possible assistance from officials.

“But,” you will say, “is not social action, co-operation, a good thing? Does it not distinguish the civilized from the barbarous community?”

Yes, co-operation is a very good thing; the more we have of it the better. If A, B, and C unite their forces to accomplish what they desire, they gain not only in power to accomplish their end, but in character also. And be very sure that if any end is worth co-operating for, men will co-operate. But there is a kind of co-operation which is not a good thing—when A compels B, C, and D to co-operate with him to accomplish an end that they may or may not desire.

Let me give an example. Nearly every town in England has a free lending library—that is to say, a library which is not free, but which is paid for mainly by those who do not want it, and used mainly by those who do not need it.

Of the small minority of people who use the lending library, some are wealthy, many are well-to-do, a few are really poor.

The library is paid for by this small minority, and by the large majority who do not want it, judging by the fact that they do not use it. Of whom does this majority consist—this majority of people who are compelled to pay for a library they do not want? The socialists will tell you that about half of them are “very poor,” and that about a third of them are “on the verge of starvation,” that many of them are unemployed, that some of them are (in Mr. Snowden’s words) “living, eating, working, dying, in one room, for which a vampire landlord will take in rent” [and rates] “one half of all the family can earn by working

day and night." These people do not realize that their miserable pence are being taken from them week by week that the parson, the doctor, the merchant, the shopkeeper, may have a good supply of novels without paying for them. They perhaps look on the library as a kind of Blessing from Above—but not for them, of course they have no time for reading novels—and they are being diligently taught that it is the "vampire landlord" who makes their rent go up and up. They are being dragged across the line that separates the self-supporting from the pauper; they are being encouraged to cross that line; they are being compelled to contribute to the support of those who have crossed it, willingly or unwillingly—and their socialist sympathizers are urging that their burden shall be made heavier; that municipal extravagance shall be increased until their rents are doubled; that they shall be forced to feed not only their own children, but also the children of their idle neighbours.

A library is a good thing. That people who want a library should co-operate to institute one is a good thing, and if they wish to allow their poorer neighbours to use it without payment there is no reason why they should not do so. That is social action, and social action is a good thing. But that the industrious should be compelled to support the idle, and to pay for luxuries they do not want, for the benefit of those who are often far richer than themselves—this is not social action, but socialism.

Take another example. Our society has been confronted with two problems of great difficulty—to relieve the poor who are sick, and to relieve the poor who are not sick. The first problem was met by social action, and the second by socialistic action. The result was what might have been anticipated; our hospital system is a magnificent success, and our workhouse system a deplorable failure. The socialists of the Minority Report suggest that we should take a double dose of socialism to cure the evils wrought by socialism. I suggest that we should sweep away the whole demoralizing system. The State is incompetent to relieve the poor "Leave them to starve?" you ask. The poor will starve.

if it is indeed true that Englishmen are only humane so long as they have a taxgatherer at their elbow. But it is not true. The workhouses will be succeeded by institutions managed by social, not socialistic, action ; institutions which will claim public support by earning public confidence, and which will accomplish their purpose, sympathetically and economically, like the hospitals. The difference between social and socialistic action is the difference between a subscription and a rate.

Whether socialism is a good thing or a very bad thing you are to judge ; and you can best judge this, if you are still in doubt, by helping the socialists to carry out their policy in an experimental colony of socialists, and by watching the results that follow when that policy is carried out in its entirety.



